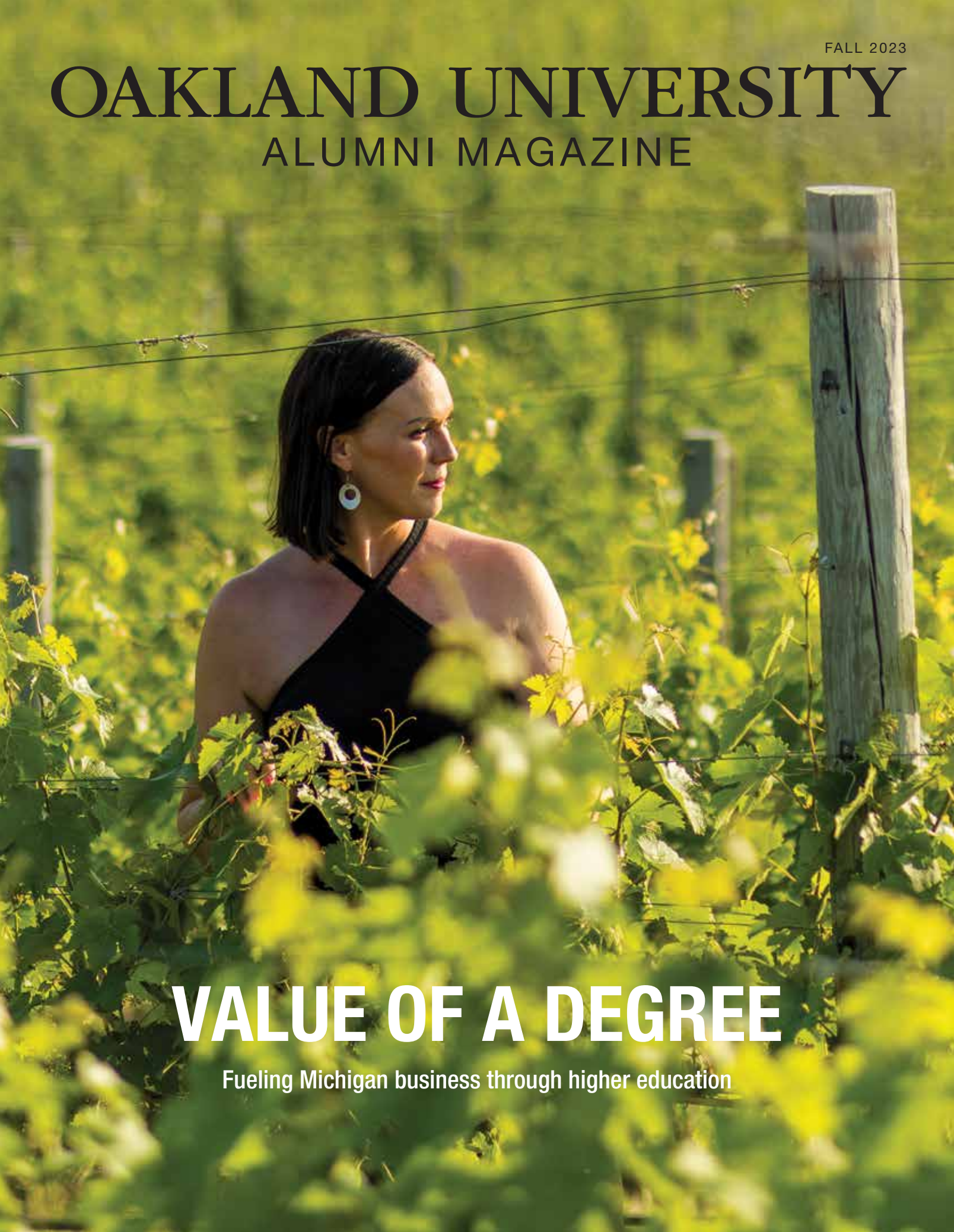


FALL 2023

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI MAGAZINE



VALUE OF A DEGREE

Fueling Michigan business through higher education

Commencement

This spring, more than 2,000 OU students officially became alumni of Oakland University, many of whom celebrated by walking at the O'Rena commencement in May. ➤



© Robert Hall

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Power couple create community influence and culture-shifting brand concepts

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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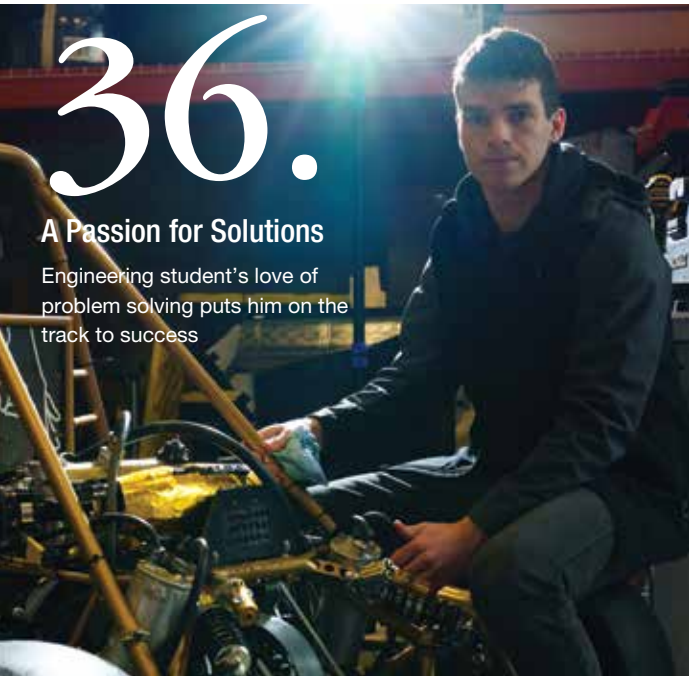
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STAFF

VICE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING
John Young

EDITOR
Kelli M. Warshefski, CAS '13 and '16

CONTENT COORDINATOR
Michael Downes

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Debra Lashbrook

DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION SERVICES
Shelby Kramer, CAS '07

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Robert Hall, John McTaggart

PROOFREADER
Shelly Kelley

CONTRIBUTING MULTIMEDIA
Jon Paul Bakaric, Sarah Griffith, CAS '18

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Kathy Angel, CAS '09 and '18,
Kristina Lindberg, Emily Morris, CAS '21,
Rebecca Steketee

EDITORIAL OFFICES
Anibal House, Oakland University
630 Pioneer Drive, Rochester
Michigan 48309-4482

Phone (248) 370-3184
Fax (248) 370-3182

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

VICE PRESIDENT, ADVANCEMENT
Michael Westfall

SENIOR DIRECTOR
Erin Sudrovec

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EXPANDING ALUMNI BASE

Oakland University has more than
132,000 alumni

EMPLOYED IN MICHIGAN

97% percent of employed graduates
reported employment in Michigan

61.5%
are employed in
Oakland County

16%
are employed in
Macomb County

15%
are employed in
Wayne County

CAREER OUTCOMES RATE

86% of all graduates are employed,
participating in a program of voluntary service,
serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, or enrolled
in a program of continuing education

MEDIAN SALARY

Bachelor's degree from OU earns
a median salary of **\$55,000**

¹ According to data pulled in April 2023 from the Oakland University Post-graduation Dashboard: oakland.edu/app/post-grad-dsh

² The Association of American Universities is composed of America's leading research universities: aau.edu/economic-impact

³ Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C.: brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption

VALUE OF A DEGREE

Fueling Michigan business through higher education

As Oakland University alumni, we understand the importance of higher education. Some of us are using our degrees directly, while others have gone different routes after college. Regardless of where your path led you, it began here, at OU. The confidence that was instilled in you by your professors, the deadlines that helped keep you on task, the social hours with classmates that created lifelong bonds – these are immeasurable attributes that can only derive from time spent in higher education. And the benefits of universities expand well beyond the impact it has on personal growth, but also economic growth.

Photos left to right:

1. Rick Williams, SBA '05, and Yolanda Williams, CAS '05, are the creators of the Metro Detroit-based brands *DISTINCT LIFE* and *CREAM BLENDS*.
2. McKenzie Gallagher, CAS '05, owns Rove Estate Winery in Traverse City with her husband.
3. David "DJ" Bond, CAS '12 and SBA '16, creates his own comic book series, *"The Shadow Agency."*
4. Johnna Struck, SBA '85, is the owner and president of *Changing Places Moving* company.
5. Paul Haig, SEHS '73, owns Haig's of Rochester Fine Jewelry and Objects of Art.

Since 2015, 97% of alumni are employed in Michigan, with 61.5% staying within Oakland County.¹ Nationwide studies have shown that areas that include universities drive greater innovation and contribute more money back into the economy. According to the Association of American Universities² because institutions produce graduates who are well-educated and can acquire high-paying jobs, they are therefore able to contribute more into the economic growth of the state through their daily living expenses, real estate and revenue generation that expand the tax base. Additionally, whether alumni find employment in the public or private sector, they can develop cutting-edge technologies and create new businesses that offer employment opportunities for more graduates. Brookings Institution³ simplifies it best, stating that education is the cause of higher incomes, and higher incomes drive higher spending, hence there is a direct correlation between college education and consumption that affects greater economic activity and fuels prosperity at the regional and national levels.

OU graduates, for example, are earning a median full-time salary of \$55,000. And, as a university, we contribute nearly \$1 billion in economic impact to the region. So, while the importance of higher education is often questioned and analyzed, it's clear that through a personal and economic lens, there is value in higher education.

In this issue, we're exploring how our graduates are fueling Michigan's economy, with stories about alumni who own a business or are contributing to the community. These local entrepreneurs, innovators and professionals are making their mark on Michigan business. ➤

Share your stories at oakland.edu/oumagazine.



A Coaching Legacy

For more than four decades, Pete Hovland has created a dynasty as OU's swimming and diving head coach, pushing the program to incredible prestige. ➤



Essence of Jazz

Gayelynn McKinney loves and has performed all different styles of music. But, through it all, she has always been drawn back to jazz. The creativity, improvisation and authenticity of the music fill her soul. ➤



Push Goddess

Sharina Jones' journey to becoming the embodiment of a goddess. ➤

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ALUMNI *Voices*

“
*Our entire circle is from Oakland.
We built a community in Oakland,
and this group has gone onto
be leaders outside of OU, too.*

”
YOLANDA WILLIAMS, CAS '05
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.

GRIZZLIES HELPING GRIZZLIES

"The Pantry will always have a special place in my heart. After learning about how an average of 36% of students nationwide report experiencing food insecurity during their college education, I helped lead the Young Alumni Chapter Philanthropy Committee in highlighting the fund for a 2020 Giving Tuesday campaign. The young alumni came out in full force and we were able to have more participation than all other groups contributing to the fund during that year."

— Russell Bauer, SEHS '17, SBA '20

"Many people do not realize the significant number of students who struggle to feed themselves while in higher education. The Golden Grizzlies Pantry strives to meet the basic needs of the university community so that they can focus on putting their best foot forward. Over 10,000 pounds of food were distributed to the university community in 2022, with numbers steadily increasing in 2023."

— Bella Levitt, Pantry Manager, social work master's student



**Ways to support the
Golden Grizzlies Pantry:**
GIVE DONATIONS

Give food, toiletries or time by contacting oupantry@oakland.edu

NEW! Grizz Garments

Did you know that the Grizz Garment Closet provides casual and interview-ready clothing to students who need it, no questions asked? Find out more at oakland.edu/osi/pantry/grizz-garments/.

ucm25838/6.23



THE FIT COUPLE

Power couple create community
influence, culture-shifting brand
concepts and high-profile business
collaborations

By Emily Morris  Robert Hall



THE IT COUPLE

Nonchalant nods across the Oakland Center Help Desk turned into smiles over ice cream in the cafeteria, setting the scene for their love story. Business-minded Rick Williams, SBA '05, was smitten with creative poet Yolanda Williams, CAS '05, at first sight.

From Meet Cute to Marketing Magic

"Oh, he did those little 'what's up' nods for weeks before we finally talked," Yolanda says. Nervous glances only lasted so long before Rick slid into a booth next to Yolanda and started talking, a moment that would change the rest of their lives. "I was just planting the seeds to start the conversation," Rick says.

The couple quickly became university sweethearts. "Not to toot my own horn, but we were the couple," Yolanda says. "At first, people would ask if

we would date around more in college, but we were just it for each other." After many more ice cream dates, shared walks across campus and visits to each other's dorms, they tied the knot at a small venue down Walton Street near OU, inviting friends, faculty and staff that had been the core to their story. By Monday morning, they'd wound right back at the place that started it all: OU.

Both drawn to Oakland University because of its sense of home, they not only found each other but an entire community of support. "When I started meeting people at OU, it was like I was

finding my culture again," Rick says.

"Our entire circle is from Oakland," Yolanda says. "We built a community in Oakland, and this group has gone on to be leaders outside of OU, too." The relationships they fostered continue to uplift them today, expanding beyond campus to connections in the surrounding communities.

Nineteen years and two kids later, their adventure hasn't slowed down. Today, these entrepreneurs utilize their networking skills to grow an immersive lifestyle brand through DISTINCT LIFE and CREAM BLENDS, all while inspiring other emerging businesses.

A Distinct Drive

Their combined creative and entrepreneurial talents balanced the dynamic duo. Yolanda's writing skills from her English

studies weaved seamlessly into Rick’s cutting-edge business persona, immediately launching the start of their brand after graduation.

A modest screen-printing business was soon situated in their basement, an idea that swirled together a need for marketing, writing, design and a strong business outlook. They didn’t have a clear vision of their future, but they had a strong foundation in their relationship and their studies at OU.

Jean Ann Miller, senior director for the Office for Student Involvement, remembered the duo and put their first large t-shirt order in motion. “It was our first job like that for t-shirts,” Rick says.

Their business ventures have since moved out of their basement and span into many more avenues. While they both support each other in each component, Rick leads the business and creative facets of DISTINCT LIFE, a Metro

Detroit-based lifestyle brand, and Yolanda has found her passion in CREAM BLENDS, an inclusive skincare and wellness company.

DISTINCT LIFE touches on multiple markets, ranging from apparel and footwear to music and home goods, like throw blankets and incense holders. The couple wanted to offer a variety of products that truly represent them and could ignite a spark within their community. Specifically, Rick takes pride in the shoes that he designs in partnership with brands like Puma and New Balance. Each shoe balances a high-quality, artistic design with personal stories. “The shoes get people in the building, but the stories are what get them to stay,” Yolanda says.

Rick collaborated with athletic footwear and clothing brand Reebok on a project to highlight up-and-coming photographers. Each shoe was inspired by the work of a photographer, and a



complementary tag showcased the photographer’s Instagram, highlighting not only the beauty they captured but their stories as well.

Yolanda inspires similar feelings of connection by offering CREAM BLENDS skincare to “real people of any gender.” She didn’t originally see herself setting out to establish a skincare brand, but she saw a need for inclusivity and gentle products. “We started CREAM BLENDS in our kitchen in 2013,” she says. “Skincare for everyone was just something that was needed, so I did it.”

CREAM BLENDS offers a variety of scents and products for people of all ages. “It’s all subjective,” she says. “Scents should just depend on what you like, without

being masculine or feminine, and we make natural products for all skin.”

Yolanda and Rick continue to pursue new business ventures that inspire them and where they see needs in the market. “We’re just two entrepreneurs trying to find our way in the world,” Yolanda says.

Cultivating Community

Finding their footing through a core community at OU helped launch their brand, and Yolanda and Rick are now becoming that community for many more. DISTINCT LIFE collaborates with other businesses, often spurring new levels of creativity from the couple and for other businesses.

In total, the duo has shared branding and marketing advice with dozens of local businesses, offering one-on-one and group workshops regularly. “Different people have different ways and forms of activism,” Yolanda says. “A lawyer can step in if you’re not being heard, a doctor can step in and make sure you’re cared for, and a writer can make sure your press releases are polished. We’re all part of a puzzle, and branding and marketing classes are the skills and advice we can offer to the community.”

Their activist mindset carries each product they foster as well, ranging from donating portions of proceeds to nonprofit organizations to spreading impactful messages. Rick, for

instance, is currently working on a new facet of DISTINCT LIFE: music that incorporates the sounds of tap dance and spoken word. “The idea is that a tap dancer is really a drummer. There’re different cadences, bars,

tones — it’s all there,” Rick says. “That’s how it’s been traditionally used with early Jazz and even further back.”

Tap dancing traditionally offered an instrumental outlet when

instruments weren’t available in the Black community. Amounting to an album called the “Geezy Experiment,” Rick shared this activism with a live showcase in June to accompany Juneteenth celebrations.

Whether Rick and Yolanda are sharing skills or stories, the cultural and communal impact is always leading their decisions and next ventures. “We believe that’s our mission: to live lives that can inspire people,” says Rick. “We bring that into each project we’re involved with.” 🍌



IN THE GOLD SEAT

with MACKENNA GREENE

MAJOR: Bachelor of Arts in music education, 2021

OCCUPATION: Owner and lead instructor at Red Piano Music Studio

FAVORITE STUDY SPOT ON CAMPUS: There was a small “secret” hidden room near the Elliott Starbucks that was a favorite of music students to study in.

GO-TO PARKING LOT: The Varner lot.

FAVORITE FOOD OR PLACE TO EAT ON CAMPUS: Before it closed, Au Bon Pan’s black bean burger was my daily dinner; so good.

FAVORITE CAMPUS EVENT: Every jazz band concert. They were all so much fun to perform in and always had packed audiences.

FAVORITE MOMENT ON CAMPUS: We used to have late-night practice sessions in Varner. We would grab dinner, hit the practice room until 1 or 2 a.m., then get together for a Taco Bell run or movie night.

FAVORITE PROFESSOR: I had so many great professors at OU, but I have to give a special shout-out to Dr. Pam Klena and Dr. Deborah VanderLinde, two absolutely outstanding Music Education professors and mentors who immensely helped me navigate my degree.

SONG(S) YOU LISTEN TO WHEN YOU’RE STUDYING: Beethoven’s 6th Symphony, Rachmaninoff’s 2nd Piano Concerto and Copland’s Appalachian Spring.

SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOURSELF: I’ve been teaching music since I was 16. I started my own music teaching business as a sophomore at OU and hired some friends to teach along with me. ➤



© Robert Hall

Saving the world from a giant spider. Creating and controlling fire. Hoping to make a real difference. David “DJ” Bond, CAS ’12 and SBA ’16, creates comic book characters who may have the coolest superpowers — but ultimately, they are still people who face everyday challenges and adversities.

“Endurance Comics is about people who push through,” says Bond. “I tend to lean into the superhero, fantastical elements, but I really like to tell stories about characters with all different kinds of backgrounds, all different kinds of diversity who have to use what’s inside of them to push through the issues presented to them on a macro level.”

Bond’s love for creative writing blossomed early on, but his passion for comics was born during an OU English capstone class that focused on comics and graphic novels. “That’s really when I started loving comics as a genre,” says Bond. “As a kid, I read superhero comics, like Marvel and DC, but the capstone course really gave me the idea to write them.”

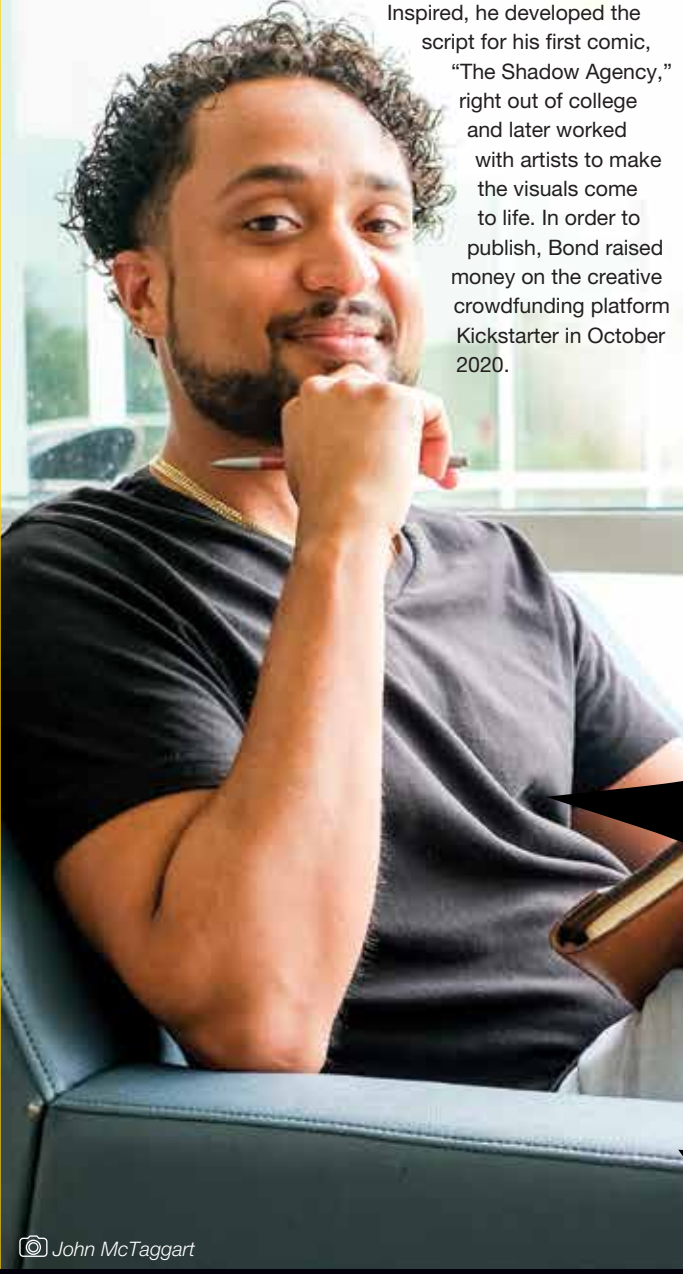
Bond set an ambitious goal of raising \$5,000 in 30 days, reaching it just moments before the deadline. “We had minutes left when we hit our goal. It was like New Year’s Eve. It was so exciting,” Bond says. With the funds, he printed 1,000 books which are sold online and during select events at bookstores.

With two additional scripts finished for the “Shadow Agency” and a new comic “Only Yellow Door” in the works, Bond is planning on publishing the next book in the near future.

While major comic book publishers have come a long way in creating more diverse characters, Bond believes there is always room for growth. “We are making a lot of steps forward in these spaces and are making sure that people who are not

frequently represented have a chance to tell their side of the story,” Bond says. Although his comic is geared toward older teens and young adults, Bond hopes audiences of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy his stories. He especially likes when his audience find a character they can relate to. “I always love that. That’s what stories are for — to help people identify with characters,” he says. “It helps them see what kind of growth and development they can have in spite of these outward forces.” ➤

Inspired, he developed the script for his first comic, “The Shadow Agency,” right out of college and later worked with artists to make the visuals come to life. In order to publish, Bond raised money on the creative crowdfunding platform Kickstarter in October 2020.



© John McTaggart

WRITING OUTSIDE THE LINES

By Kristina Lindberg

THE CURIOUS COLLECTOR

Textiles, stones and relics:
a local jeweler's journey to
becoming a curation specialist

By Michael Downes  Robert Hall



“Now cut this very carefully; it’s an emerald.”

Twelve-year-old Paul Haig, SEHS '73, worked diligently to make sure the “stone” was cut perfectly, carefully mapping out his next move with surgical precision. Then, a little slip of the hand and he miscut. But he didn’t panic. Keeping his composure, Haig salvaged the “precious stone” and presented his immaculately trimmed “gem” to expert stonecutter Pierre Touchette, who inspected it and poured over each delicate cut.

Touchette, who taught the young Haig how to cut stones, pulled out the remaining parts of the emerald-colored 7UP bottle, which had served as the “stone” he gave Haig to practice on.

“Whatever you do, treat it like it’s the most valuable thing in your life, and do the best that

you can”; Touchette’s words of wisdom to his young student left a lasting impression — and became a life lesson that Haig didn’t take lightly.

That mindset has been woven into Haig’s life and has helped him in all his ventures, whether in his jewelry business that’s celebrating 50 years of service this year, in his marriage with his wife, Diane, SECS '83, or in his journey collecting textiles, stones, and whatever else he’s curious about at the time.

Growing up, Haig and his family didn’t stay in one place for too long as his father was a scientist whose job required frequent moves across the country. Haig bounced around from Massachusetts to California and nearly everywhere in between.





Haig stayed busy at OU. As a freshman, he got a job as a night watchman at Camp Oakland, where he restarted a tutoring program with the help of the School of Education and Human Services, as well as an arts and crafts program. In the mornings, Haig was a student teacher for a second-grade class and spent his afternoons with special needs students. He also landed jobs as a janitor for the university and as a chauffeur at Meadowbrook Hall.

“I never saw a tree grow as a kid,” explains Haig. “I never watched anyone grow up. We were just constantly moving.”

As the family journeyed around the country, Haig and his brother went on their own adventures in each city. “My family would drive our VW Microbus as we traveled from place to place,” Haig recalls. “When we stopped somewhere, my brother and I would go collect stones. We had a 40-pound limit each, and I would end up paying my brother to put my stones in his bag.”

Haig would also frequently visit museums along the way — the LA County Museum, The Smithsonian and The Museum of Natural History — where Haig explored the exhibits, learning about textiles, stones and relics. These adventures ultimately sparked his curiosity, the driving force behind his impassioned personality.

Haig’s initial interest in stones transitioned into a passion for the gemstone business. He joined rock clubs wherever his family moved. By the time he was 14, he had his own business license to polish stones and repair items,

and a year later was working for an opal dealer. Haig traveled to Seattle to work gem shows alongside his boss, who would buy and sell precious opals. Haig was like a sponge at these events, absorbing any information he could about not only stones but the business side of things.

Eventually, Haig’s family was able to set down some roots in his father’s hometown. “It was wonderful to come to Rochester and just have one place to stay,” says Haig.

Haig’s curious mind was always looking for avenues to learn new things and better the community around him; a community he has been deeply rooted in since his move.

In 1973, a freshly graduated Haig rented space above the Feed and Seed store in Rochester to start Haig’s Jewelers, a business that encompassed his love of precious stones. Fifty years later, he operates his own three-story storefront on Main Street in downtown Rochester. The showroom is on the ground floor, displaying all the lustrous and ornate jewelry Haig has collected and crafted. The basement is

where Haig and his staff are able to hone their skills — cutting, cleaning and intricately crafting metals and gems. Upstairs boasts a mini-museum of Haig’s personal collection of relics, textiles and stones.

Aside from operating a successful business, Haig and his wife are constantly giving back to the community. They volunteer their time at cancer walks and races throughout the state, and spend time in classrooms teaching business students the tricks of the trade.

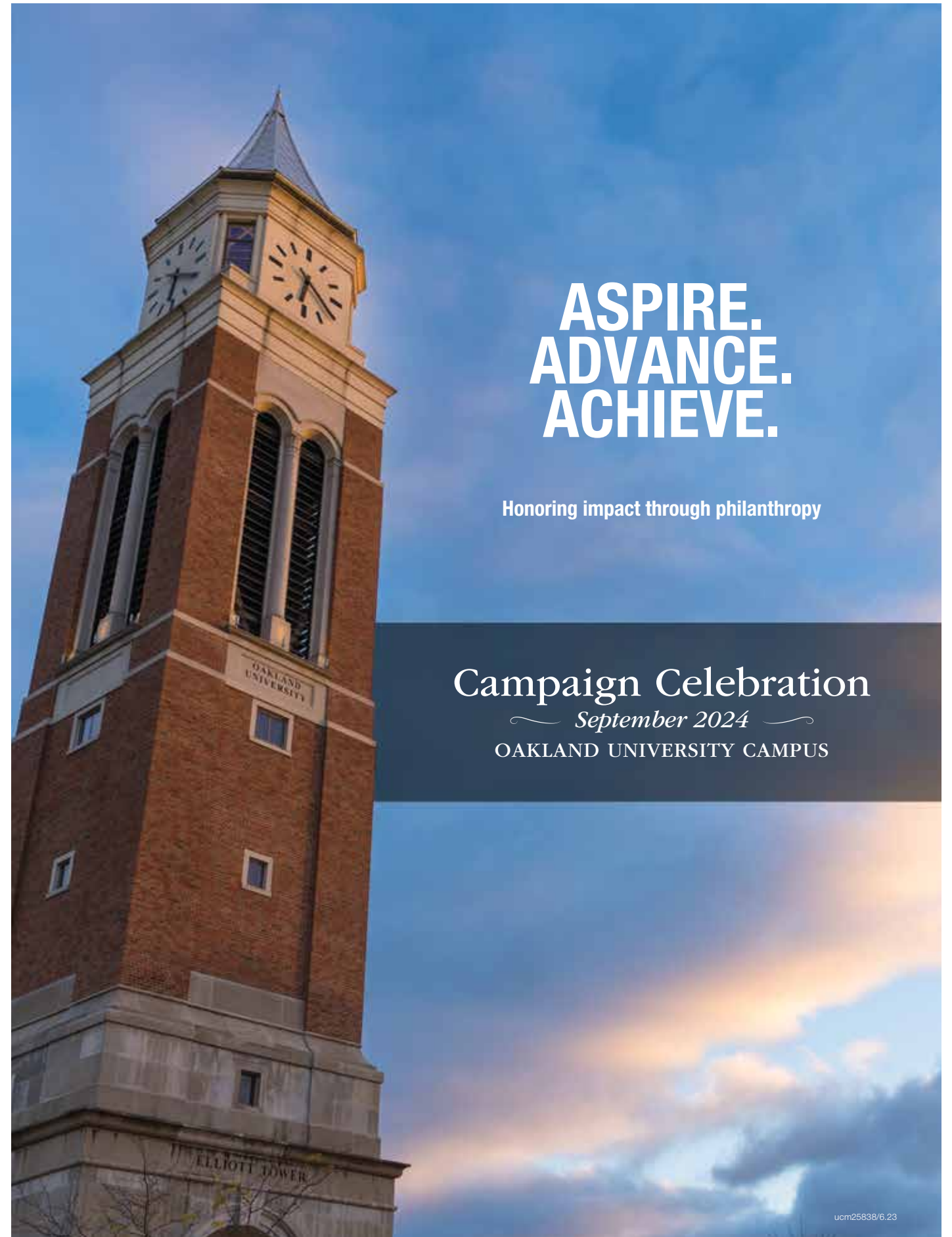
Deeply transformed by his own experience of learning things hands-on, Haig brings students with all different kinds of focuses into his store to teach them about stones, relics, history and business.

Passion and curiosity are still the force behind Haig’s never-ending drive, and it’s still as prominent as it was when he was a 12-year-old cutting his first “emerald.”

“There is always more to learn and experience, so it’s important to never stop,” says Haig. ➤



The newest passion for Haig and his wife? Therapy dogs. If you swing by their shop you can meet their newest student, Ruby.



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September 2024

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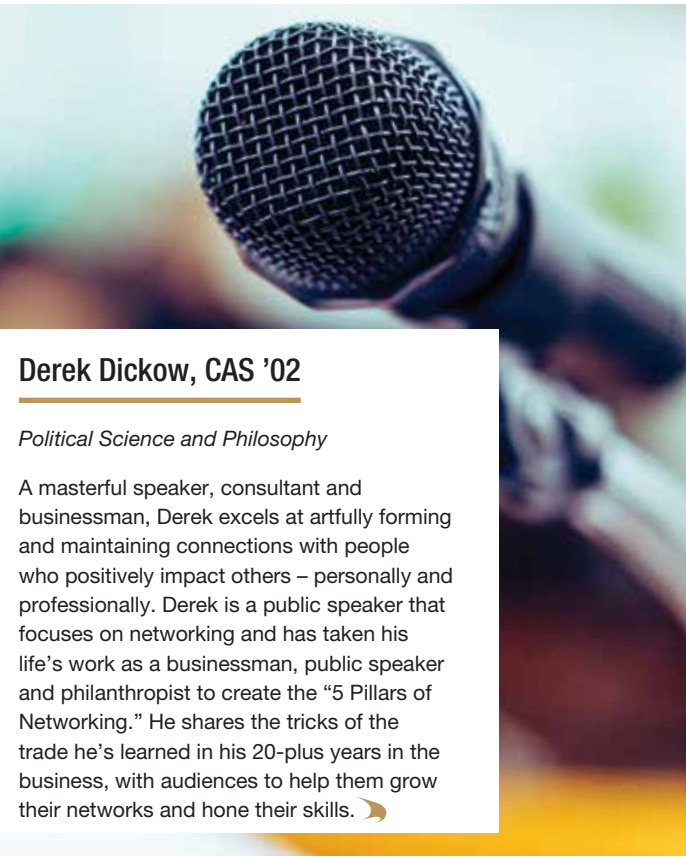
CLASS NOTES



Fernanda Turco, SBA '20

Business Administration

Fernanda is currently a manager of Global EV Ecosystem and Charging Experience at General Motors. She was a graduate of the university's Executive Master of Business program. This program highlights the importance of in person/ cohort concierge program design, and the quality of the faculty experience and research was instrumental in her success. Fernanda talks regularly with her cohort peers. She says that the network of professionals she has met from a diverse range of industries through the EMBA program has enhanced her personal and professional experience. ➤



Derek Dickow, CAS '02

Political Science and Philosophy

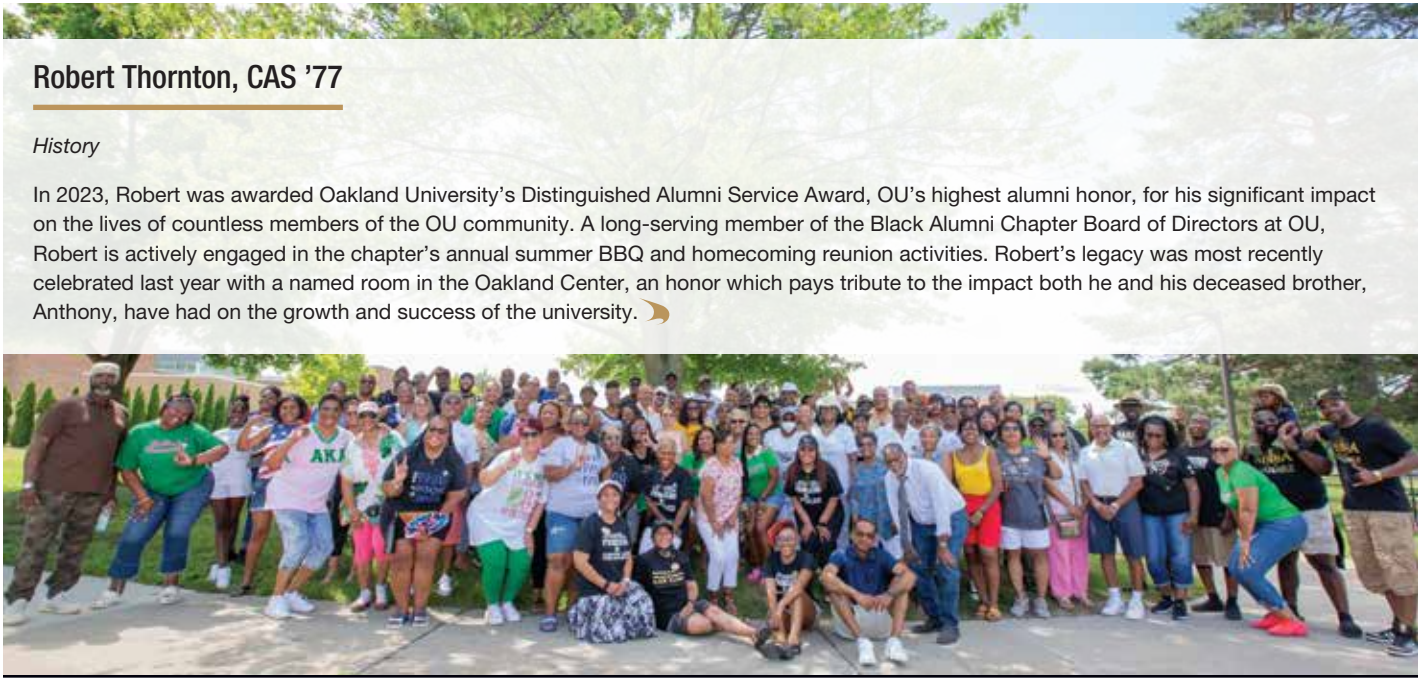
A masterful speaker, consultant and businessman, Derek excels at artfully forming and maintaining connections with people who positively impact others – personally and professionally. Derek is a public speaker that focuses on networking and has taken his life's work as a businessman, public speaker and philanthropist to create the "5 Pillars of Networking." He shares the tricks of the trade he's learned in his 20-plus years in the business, with audiences to help them grow their networks and hone their skills. ➤



Greg Kreiner, SBA '04

Finance

Greg recently became an equity partner at Lifetime Financial Growth (LFG), a privately owned wealth management and planning firm. As president of LFG, he helps entrepreneurial-minded individuals build a successful business in financial services. Prior to stepping into this role, Greg was a partner in one of Guardian's largest brokerage disability and life practices, and started his career in the insurance and financial services industry right out of college in 2004. ➤



Robert Thornton, CAS '77

History

In 2023, Robert was awarded Oakland University's Distinguished Alumni Service Award, OU's highest alumni honor, for his significant impact on the lives of countless members of the OU community. A long-serving member of the Black Alumni Chapter Board of Directors at OU, Robert is actively engaged in the chapter's annual summer BBQ and homecoming reunion activities. Robert's legacy was most recently celebrated last year with a named room in the Oakland Center, an honor which pays tribute to the impact both he and his deceased brother, Anthony, have had on the growth and success of the university. ➤

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oakland.edu/alumni/events

Rebecca Mix, CAS '17

English

Rebecca is a New York Times and Indie bestselling author of "The Ones We Burn," a young adult fantasy novel published by Simon & Schuster. Her middle grade fantasy debut "The Mossheart's Promise" will be published September 5, 2023 from HarperCollins. When she isn't writing, Rebecca is an account supervisor in pharmaceutical marketing with GCI Health where she blends her expertise in campaign strategy, corporate communications, client service and digital media strategy. Rebecca received the 2023 Oakland University Young Alumni 10 within 10 Award. ➤





Kristine Donahue, SON '11

Nursing

In 2022, Kristine became president for the downriver Beaumont Hospitals: Taylor, Trenton and Wayne. A lifelong Downriver native, Kristine is taking on the task of managing the three hospitals after a long career as a nurse, supervisor and pivotal component of the Beaumont medical team. Kristine is also the system administrative lead for the Trauma Clinical Care program. She plays a vital role in assessing coding and billing, developing a system trauma dashboard, creating standards of care for the geriatric population, and assessing the impact of no-fault auto law legislation changes and patient access to appropriate care. ➤



Brianne Zborowski, SBA '03

Business Management

Brianne is the co-founder and CEO of Apolla Performance Wear, a dance wear company that focuses on how dancers take care of themselves. A dancer since she was seven years old, Brianne works closely with her two other co-founders to create and sell footwear, compression socks and other accessories to help dancers to maximize their craft. Brianne's dance shoe designs were featured on Shark Tank in 2022. ➤



Kevin Pratt, SBA '14

Business Administration

Kevin co-founded Motown Aquaponics in 2016, merging his OU Master of Business Administration with his MSU Zoology undergraduate degree. Motown Aquaponics produces sustainable and fresh produce and seafood. The company also seeks to engage the community of Detroit through educational outreach and public installations. Kevin is also the senior technical product owner of Thermo Fisher Scientific. ➤

**WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**

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



ROOTED

Vineyard owner
combines
family heritage
and tradition with
entrepreneurial
dreams

By Kelli M. Warshefski  Sarah Griffith

A Traverse City area native, McKenzie (Hartman) Gallagher, CAS '05, loves the views, the people and the community of the lakeside city she calls home. Deeply rooted in the region, she and her husband are raising their four children here and have started a business, Rove Estate Winery, on the Gallagher family farm. Over the years, she has established strong ties to Traverse City, creating a foundation that has helped forge a path in pursuit of her dreams.

"I feel really grateful that I live in one of the most beautiful states in the country, and that I am able to raise my kids in a nonconventional way on our farm," McKenzie says. "To be able to extend our passion for farming to cultivating award-winning wines, is truly the most fulfilling life I could've imagined."

Planting Seeds for Success

Graduating from OU runs in the Hartman household. With McKenzie's father, aunt and cousins all alumni, it was a natural decision for both McKenzie and

her sister to move downstate to also attend.

"I lived on campus, so I was completely submerged," McKenzie says of her time at Oakland. "That really gave me a sense of community and connection. And I loved that. Some of my very best friends to this day were the ones I met during my first semester freshmen year. It was my home."

McKenzie came to the university with her sights set on becoming a doctor. She enrolled in a pre-medical curriculum, focusing on biology and chemistry. During

her junior year, though, McKenzie realized the world of medicine was not suited for her, and she switched her major to sociology. This program nurtured her love of learning about people, and her goals honed in on a career working with and helping others.

"It's such a magical time," McKenzie recalls fondly of her time at OU. "It's that time period in your life when you have no fear, no reservations. You talk to different kinds of people and learn about different things. I'm so grateful I took advantage of every aspect of student life on campus."

"It allowed me to figure myself out," she continues. "And that's an empowering feeling to determine your own schedule and your work-life balance. I don't think I knew at the time, but that was the beginning of planting those seeds of who I wanted to be. And I definitely think that throughout life, you just continue to water those seeds and perfect it."

McKenzie and her husband, Creighton, enjoy the time they get to spend with their four children around the family farm.

After graduation, McKenzie stayed "down state" for several years, finding work as an underwriter at a local bank. But the 2008 banking crisis forced her back to Traverse City to start a new path. She enrolled at Davenport University for a Master of Business Administration, and shortly after met her future husband, Creighton, also a Traverse City area native. Unbeknownst to her, this turn of events would vastly reshape the trajectory of her life as she began to forge a new path: vineyard farming.

"I never would've thought in a million years that I would fall in love with a farmer and open a winery," McKenzie confesses.

Establishing Roots in the Region

The Gallagher family is well-known in the Traverse City area, with farming roots that date back nearly 140 years. They were established cherry farmers, and Creighton knew and worked on his family's orchards. Farming is in his blood.



Rove Estate Winery opened a tasting room in 2016.

"They're one of the first Centennial farm families," McKenzie explains about her husband's family. "I did not have farming in my background. But, I fell in love with a farmer and suddenly his dream became our dream. It felt serendipitous."

McKenzie quickly became mesmerized by Creighton and the farming lifestyle, and the two married about a year after they met. They began to share a dream of one day owning a

vineyard, so McKenzie focused her MBA thesis on a business plan to start a winery. The two worked together to come up with a solid foundation they hoped would one day bear fruit. In 2011, the young Gallagher couple was offered the chance to purchase a large portion of Creighton's family farm: 100 acres of old cherry trees that were no longer producing. They jumped at the opportunity, ready to take hold of their dreams.



“We were at a crossroads: should we plant more cherries because that’s what we know how to do or should we follow our hearts and do something that we don’t know much about, which is grapes,” McKenzie says. “I guess we were adventurous.”

McKenzie and her husband started off planting 15 acres of grapes in 2012, utilizing government programs through the Farm Service Agency and United States Department of Agriculture, which provided grants geared toward young farmers. They poured their hearts into the land in preparation for a 2015 opening season. And then, Mother Nature stepped in.

“There was a polar vortex in Michigan in 2014 and a late spring frost in 2015,” explains McKenzie. “We ended up losing our entire crop in 2015 and we had damage from 2014. So, two back-to-back years we had terrible winters. We were supposed to open and we completely lost 95% of our crop.”

The couple had everything riding on this opening. And by this point, they were starting their own family, so the pressure was even greater. McKenzie and her husband were devastated by the blow. But they didn’t stay down for long and soon found a solution to keep their opening on schedule. Instead of using their own crop that year, they were forced to improvise and worked with another vineyard to purchase grapes to make their style of wine. This allowed them to remain open, start establishing a clientele and give their own crop some extra time to recover after the harsh winters.

By now, Rove Estate Winery was officially in business and the couple was successfully pursuing their dream. But the hardships continued for McKenzie. A year after opening, she was diagnosed with cancer and endured chemotherapy while starting a new business and taking care of four young children. McKenzie persevered, though, and is grateful to now be cancer-free for five years.



“There’s been multiple hard challenges, too many to list, but you find the right path and embrace it,” McKenzie says. “If you have an open mind, you will always find a way if that’s where your passion lies. You have to pause and realize that sometimes things seem worse than they actually are. It’s something you constantly work on. Surrounding yourself with confident people in a positive environment is how you thrive.”

Nurturing Growth

Rove Estate Winery is a labor of love, patience and determination for the Gallaghers. Since 2011, they’ve opened a tasting room, expanded to 33 acres of grapes, maintained generational cherry

groves, and have recently begun producing apple cider with a small orchard. They staff between six to 20 people, depending on the season. They’re raising their kids with an appreciation for nature and strong work ethic, involving them in the day-to-day activities around the farm.

In the wine business, every bottle, every crop, every year yields a different return. It’s this variety that McKenzie was first drawn to when starting a vineyard. Once they recovered from the first harsh winter, they were able to produce their own estate grown wines, “ground-to-glass.”

“We’re a small batch winery, so we only produce about 5,000 cases a year currently, and that

number will increase to about 8,000 cases when all vineyards are in full production,” McKenzie explains. “Everything comes from our estate. Every vintage is going to be a little bit different because it’s going to reflect on the heat that year, the rainfall and a million other variables that are going to show different nuances in the wine. It’s the exact same vines, but the grapes will just be different every year.”

The budding business is continually growing and perfecting its practices, embracing the dream McKenzie and her husband conceived nearly 13 years ago. And while her journey began at OU on a slightly different path, she believes she

ended up exactly where she was meant to be.

“My sociology degree has helped me in every aspect of owning my own business,” says McKenzie. “Whether it’s interacting with our customers or employees. I’m trying to connect with and understand people, where they are coming from, how to inspire them, how to get them engaged, is such an art. I don’t know if I would’ve had those skills without learning so much about people.”

“You write your own story, you forge your own path,” McKenzie says. “It’s been a crazy 15 years but I wouldn’t change one bit of it.” 🍷

THE MEANING OF ROVE ESTATE WINERY

“Rove actually means a journey without a destination. And we say that because it felt like such a pipe dream. We were so young and just married, but we put 100% into this. It really felt like a journey without a destination. We weren’t exactly sure how or where we would end up but we went full throttle.

Creighton and I are both Irish. We wanted to somehow connect our Irish roots and ancestry with wine. Not many people know this, but there is a worldwide International Society of Irish winemakers called ‘The Wine Geese,’ which is why we have a goose on our label.

In the 1600s, a lot of the Irish were fleeing Ireland because of the famine and the war, in what is historically known as the ‘Flight of the Wild Geese.’ They took a chance of a better life, to follow their dreams. A lot of them became Irish winemakers all over the world.

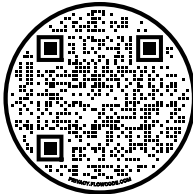
This story really resonated with us. We were on a destination, we were following our dreams, but we didn’t know exactly where we were going to end up. And it really inspired us. That’s why we wanted to pay homage to our Irish ancestors. We bridged our Irish roots with farming roots, incorporating the sentiment of taking a chance and following our dreams.”

— McKenzie Gallagher

McKenzie works closely with her staff in the tasting room to prepare for customers.



Learn more about McKenzie by viewing her video story at oakland.edu/oumagazine/alumni-voices/2023/fall/rooted



VALUING HEALTH

Alumni who dedicate their careers toward health and wellness

By Amy Ritt and Jennesa Kreiner

HEALTH CARE MENTORSHIP

Stephanie Goike, M.D.

Stephanie Goike, OUWB '15, wanted to be a doctor for as long as she can remember. Fascinated with pedagogy and learning styles, she taught eighth-grade science before focusing on her dream career in medicine. Drawn to the innovative curriculum, teamwork and hands-on experiences offered by the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine (OUWB), Dr. Goike earned a spot in its inaugural class. Her capstone project focused on a pre-clinical tutoring program, and she continued to seek out teaching opportunities.

After joining the medical staff at Corewell Health Beaumont Troy Hospital, Goike became the site director for OUWB Troy, where she oversees medical student clinical rotations, recruits physicians for faculty at OUWB, and serves as a mentor for third-year medical students.

"I love getting to share my passion and knowledge with students, to be able to help them understand how we apply facts and knowledge to unique clinical experiences, and to truly teach the art of medicine," says Goike. ➤



TRAUMA SURGEON

Kevin Morton, D.O.

In 2007, Kevin Morton, CAS '11, was working his way through school as an undergraduate student when his life was forever changed. Shot in the abdomen by a would-be robber, he was transported to Detroit's St. John Hospital, where trauma surgeon Dharti Sheth, M.D., was able to stop his internal bleeding. During his long and grueling recovery, Dr. Morton, inspired by Dr. Sheth's skill and compassion, along with his family's support, decided to become a surgeon himself.

"I just wanted to pay it forward and positively impact my community, not only through medical care but also through emotional care for patients who are in need," says Morton.

Morton graduated from OU in 2011 with a degree in biology and later attended medical school at Michigan State University. Now part of Oakland Macomb Surgical Group, Morton went from trauma patient to trauma director, managing day-to-day operations at Ascension Hospital and performing procedures as a critical care and general surgeon. ➤



PHYSICAL THERAPY

Michael Fahmy, P.T., DPT, OMPT

Michael Fahmy, SHS '06, started his career in 1995, working for physical therapy clinics where he was concerned that patient care was not a priority. It wasn't until 2006, though, when he attended Oakland University for a post-graduate certificate and obtained his transitional Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) that he tapped into his entrepreneurial side to implement his own treatment philosophy.

"I took the knowledge and skills that I obtained during the Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapy (OMPT) post-graduate program at OU, combined with my love for patient care, and that is how my business, OMPT Specialists Physical Therapy, began," Dr. Fahmy says.

Focused on continuity of care, Fahmy opened his first clinic in Southfield, Michigan, to offer patients one-on-one treatment with the same physical therapist each visit. Now overseeing 12 clinic locations across Michigan, Fahmy prioritizes hiring OU graduates and finds fulfillment in having a positive impact on patient health and wellbeing. ➤



MENTAL HEALTH

Tara Michener, M.A., LPC, NCC

Tara Michener, SEHS '12, is passionate about reducing the stigma surrounding mental health in children and adolescents. Equipped with a Master of Arts in counseling from Oakland University, she founded TMI, LLC, a business aimed at promoting diversity through books, speaking engagements and training curriculum, as well as established the Michener Associates Counseling Center. Her work as a licensed professional counselor, speaker and author includes one-on-one counseling, group counseling, speaking engagements, author visits and more.

Profoundly affected by the bullying that she experienced during middle school, Michener started the Students Against Bullying club as an OU student to explore the impact of bullying on campus and to educate others about relational aggression. She continues to be driven by a mindset to give back to the community.

"It's important to have a plan to figure out what population needs your talent helps the most," Michener says. "Whether it's speaking, helping or volunteering, you have to care about your community in order to build it up. It's all about balance." ➤



PURE FITNESS

Amanda Fylan, M.Ed.

Fitness aficionado Amanda Fylan, SEHS '10 and '14, is the owner of Pure Barre and Clean Juice in Grand Blanc, Michigan. Her journey to small business ownership began as a student at OU, where she took barre classes at the Oakland University Recreation and Well-Being Center. Benefiting from the stress relief provided by the workout, she decided to become a certified instructor. "I knew if I needed this type of outlet to escape, so did other people, which motivated me to open a studio," says Fylan.

Just four months after opening, Pure Barre was forced to close its doors during the pandemic. But, thanks to a quick shift to virtual classes combined with a fully supportive member base, the business remained active and found new, innovative ways to connect with its members.

To further nourish the overall wellness of her community, Fylan also opened a Clean Juice franchise just two doors down from her barre studio, providing healthy, convenient food to fuel both body and mind. ➤



MOVING FORWARD

By Emily Morris 📷 Robert Hall

Moving companies connect monumental moments, from changing living places to navigating emotional spaces. Johnna Struck, SBA '85, owner and president of Changing Places Moving company, strives to help people take their move in stride.

"A moving business requires a unique set of skills," Struck says. "[Moving] is quite personal and stressful, one of the top stressors in life aside from death or divorce, but we strive to eliminate that stress."

In fact, Struck's foundation in Changing Places Moving was inspired by one of those top stressors in her own life. When her husband left her and their three young children in 2002, Struck took a risk, buying out his half of the moving company, a choice that would leave her more inspired than ever.

Operating in the background, she brought a strong business basis. Struck's accounting studies from Oakland University positioned her as the company's financial lead, even before her full ownership. With a complete map of the business' inner workings, Struck desired to be more than just the owner. "I wanted to be able to do everything, even drive a truck,"

she says. "I wanted to know what each job entails to set up good communication with my employees."

Struck took on this leadership role, entering an industry primarily dominated by men. "Overall, it shows that anyone can do anything," she says. "It's just about determining what you want in life."

For her small Waterford business to grow, Struck chose to tap into her own recent moves, including her divorce and change in position. She framed her business around the empathy required during moves. "I was able to figure out my next steps after my divorce — I was very fortunate in that aspect, and I just want to keep supporting other women in similar ways."

While re-establishing her business, there were not always ample funds to spread across the community, but from the

beginning, Struck used the resources at her fingertips. Even without initial traditional donations, Struck managed to give back by offering her moving services, trucks and time. Additionally, Struck is a co-founder and chairperson of Habitat for Humanity Oakland County Women Build Team, a nonprofit charity focusing on bringing other women out of difficult circumstances by preparing homes for them.

Changing Places Moving has doubled its truck inventory, and the team has almost tripled in size since Struck took over the business. With her personal approach to moving, the company continually experiences growth and has become a staple in the community.

"We're not just about the business; we're community-driven," Struck says. ➤

CAMPUS Highlights

“

The main reason I became a mechanical engineer was to solve problems and to help people. I've always had that greater sense of helping out and being part of the solution.

”

DAREK PANUCCI

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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.



2023 Alumni Night of Excellence

Congratulations to the 2023 Oakland University Alumni Night of Excellence honorees. A total of 18 alumni and friends were recognized in May for their achievements in business, community service, volunteerism and more, including a special group of young alumni who’ve graduated within the last 10 years. A record crowd of 250 alumni and friends gathered to celebrate the awardees at a special reception and dinner at the Auburn Hills Marriott Pontiac. Special thanks to the Oakland University Credit Union for their sponsorship of this event. For list of award recipients, visit oakland.edu/alumni/awards/alumni-night-of-excellence.

STAY UP-TO-DATE
ON OU NEWS

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

Oakland University partners with Easterseals MORC

A new collaboration between Easterseals MORC and Oakland University’s Social Work and Counseling programs through the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Education and Human Services was announced at a ceremonial signing event on March 30, 2023. It comes as the number of openings for behavioral health professionals has outpaced the number of post-secondary students entering the workforce by nearly 50%, according to the Michigan Health Council.



OU student helps create new method to detect early osteoarthritis

Oakland University student Fatima Bhatti worked with researchers from universities across the U.S. to devise a quick, economical way to screen for early Osteoarthritis (OA), the most common form of arthritis. The team designed and developed a new type of testing strip to screen for the presence of TNF- α , a protein that is secreted by the body specifically during times of injury or inflammation. Found in bodily fluids, TNF- α typically remains undetectable in healthy individuals, but elevated levels are found in inflammatory and infectious conditions. The higher the concentration, the more advanced the disease. In the case of OA, disease progression is indicated by TNF- α levels within joint fluid.

Anna Spagnuolo receives Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year Award

Oakland University Professor Anna Spagnuolo, Ph.D., has been recognized as one of the state's three recipients of the 2023 Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year award, which recognizes the outstanding contributions and dedication exhibited by the faculty from Michigan’s 15 public universities to the education of undergraduate students. Dr. Spagnuolo is a professor of mathematics and chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at OU, where she has taught since 2000. She earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in mathematics from Oakland University before receiving her doctorate in applied mathematics from Purdue University.



OU study shows that new BTrackS Target Training protocol improves balance by almost 30%

Good balance is a critical aspect of everyday life. From performing simple day-to-day activities like walking and climbing stairs to more complex, athletic activities, balance is required in order to prevent falls and injuries. Seeing the need for more accessible and affordable methods of balance measuring and training, Daniel Goble, Ph.D., Oakland University director and associate professor of exercise science, created the Balance Tracking System (BTrackS). BTrackS technology consists of a force platform that, when combined with the Assess Balance software, can be used in the health care industry to assess fall risk, vestibular disorders, neuropathy, traumatic brain injuries and more.

AAPI Employee Resource Group to honor art, achievements of OU faculty

In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, Oakland University celebrate the visual art and achievements of three OU AAPI faculty members in the Department of Art and Art History — Jeshri Bhadviya, a special lecturer in art; Yu-chuan Chen, an assistant professor of art history; and JenClare Gawaran, a special lecturer in art.

Stay Golden AT ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND

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 13-14 for Alumni Reunion Weekend 2023.

Share your triumphs. Explore the expanding campus. Meet with old friends.
Find events at oakland.edu/alumni/reunion-weekend.



By Kristina Lindberg

It's time to come home. Time to connect with former classmates and share your OU pride at the Alumni Reunion Weekend, formerly known as Homecoming and Reunion Weekend. From October 13-14, visit with your campus family and reminisce about the golden days. Catch up with friends and make new ones, and see all of the exciting things campus has to offer.

Staying involved on campus after graduating in 2007 was a natural progression for Shalonda Dennis, SBA '07, who currently serves as the co-chair of the Student Outreach and Alumni Relations committee for the OU Alumni Association Black Alumni Chapter.

"It's important for alums to be visible and for current students to trust that there are alums who care and will continue the network of support beyond graduation," Dennis says. "I also have the opportunity to meet new people, reconnect with past friends, form relationships with faculty, grow personally and professionally, and make Oakland a better place for future students."

As part of her involvement, Dennis has attended homecoming and reunion events regularly, and warmly remembers the Association of Black Students and Center for Multicultural Initiatives reunions. "It was like reuniting a sisterhood. It felt special to be in a space with all those women, reminiscing and simply having a positive experience," Dennis says. "I love coming back to campus, seeing the growth, and connecting with faculty, staff and alums that I haven't seen since graduation."

For Matthew Karrantja, CAS '97, being golden also did not end when his time as a student did. "My heart is always black and gold," he says.

After graduating, Karrantja stayed involved on campus, serving on the OU Alumni Association Board and mentoring students. Alumni reunion events have always been important to Karrantja, who has used them not only to catch up with fellow Golden Grizzlies but also as a networking opportunity.

Karrantja says while some alumni may hesitate returning to campus for Alumni Reunion Weekend for the first time, they should still come to campus to connect and network. "The important advice I can give people is to go. Don't feel awkward — go be on campus," he says. "Someone will make some warm introductions for you." 🍷

Learn more at oakland.edu/alumni.



Benjamin Schutz

A PASSION FOR SOLUTIONS

By Kathy Angel Robert Hall

OU engineering student Darek Panucci loves to solve problems. He was the kid who enjoyed doing two pages of math to find a solution. He grew up with a passion for mechanical things — spaceships, rockets, computers — and how they work. These interests, along with strong academics and a desire to have a positive impact on society, are the components of an exceptional future engineer.

Growing up in Pittsburgh, Panucci knew nothing about OU until he came in his junior year of high school to play a club soccer game. At that game, he caught the attention of OU coaches, who wanted to recruit him. His mother urged him to make engineering the bigger part of his college decision. So, Panucci did his research and liked what he found out about OU's engineering programs. Now, he says he found a "hidden gem."

"I love the campus. I love the location. I love the size, the whole atmosphere of OU," Panucci says.

Panucci is serious about academics, and it took a lot of careful planning and communication to schedule classes, studying around the four-hour daily soccer practices as well as home and away games. He took advantage of the resources available to engineering students and athletes, and he kept in close contact with professors like Shima Afshar, who helped him excel in difficult courses such as Thermodynamics.

In his sophomore year, Panucci joined Grizzlies Racing, OU's Formula Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) team, knowing it would give him valuable hands-on experience. As a team member, Panucci worked on chassis and aerodynamics.

"I fell in love with Formula SAE and everything that we do and the opportunities it opens up. It gives engineering students a head start," Panucci says. "We learn a lot of theoretical concepts in class, but Formula SAE allows us to apply that knowledge."

Panucci knew Formula SAE experience would make him a desirable hire, and he was right. Grizzlies Racing helped him to secure an internship at General Motors, beginning in the summer of 2023. His next course of action is to be an exemplary intern and secure a full-time job, with the ultimate goal of making a difference in the world through good engineering.

"The main reason I became a mechanical engineer was to solve problems and to help people," Panucci says. "I've always had that greater sense of helping out and being part of the solution." 🐾



TIME WELL SPENT

By Rebecca Steketeer Robert Hall

Since being hired at Oakland University in 1983, Andrea Eis, distinguished professor of film studies and production, has made quite an impact on the College of Arts and Sciences through her work with the arts.

Born and raised in and around New York City, Eis left the East Coast to pursue her education in the Midwest, earning degrees from Beloit College, the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and Cranbrook Academy of Art before she found herself teaching at Oakland University.

Eis has created a network of friends among the faculty — which have helped inspire her throughout her career — and the opportunities she has received have given her much

to be proud of. She has been able to develop new courses, teach study abroad programs and develop new majors.

"I was on the committees that developed the majors in studio art, graphic design and film," says Eis. "They've all been very successful with high student interest, so it feels good to have been a part of that."

Throughout all her accomplishments at OU, Eis is most proud of the success of the film production major. As the first person to develop a filmmaking

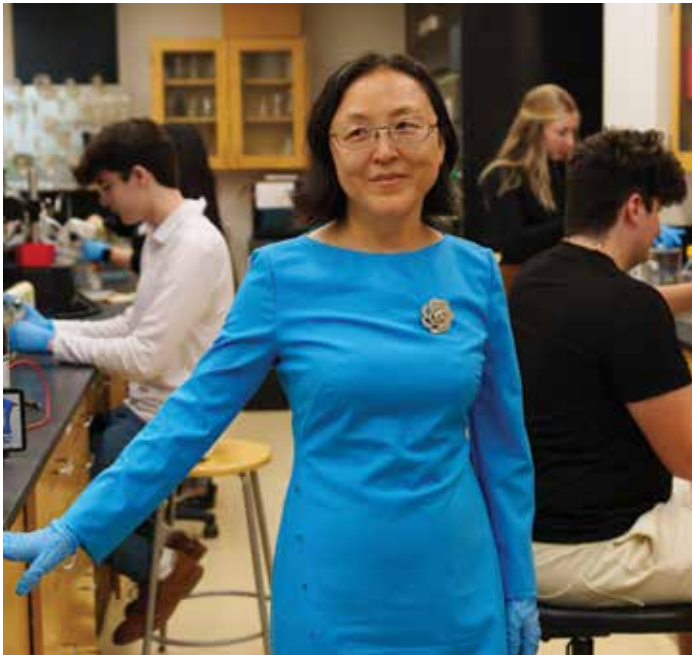
course at OU, she has enjoyed watching this course of study expand and develop highly talented individuals who go on to have success in the filmmaking industry.

Her greatest motivation over the past 40 years at OU, however, is her students. "I have been so impressed with the students since I started," Eis says. "They are creative, interested in learning, determined and enthusiastic. They make teaching a great experience."

"I am continually amazed by their ideas, the creativity they bring to making their films, their enthusiasm and interest," she adds.

Eis knows that she will be forever connected to this place. The time she has spent here has made a difference to the campus she has called home for so many years. 🐾

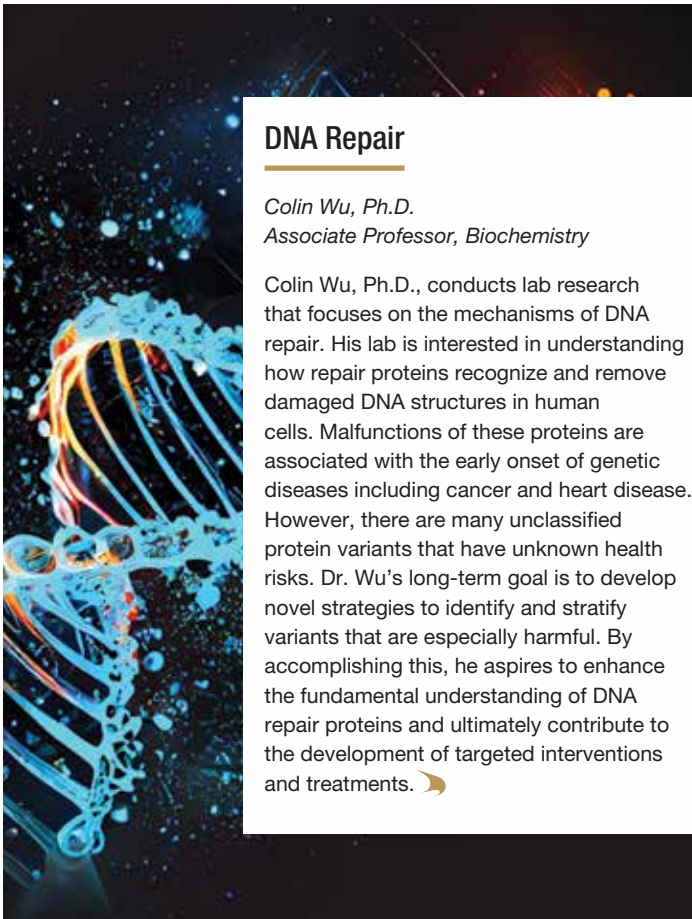
RESEARCH



Autism and Trace Elements

Zijuan Liu, Ph.D.
Professor, Biological Sciences

Zijuan Liu, Ph.D., is interested in exploring the roles of biometal transporters in neurological disorders such as autism, dementia and Alzheimer's. Trace elements, including essential and toxic elements, such as zinc, manganese, arsenic, selenium, and copper, are closely associated with human diseases, and their brain access is tightly controlled by respective membrane transporters. Dr. Liu's research focuses on the expression and regulation of these essential transporters under various neurological pathological conditions. Liu's long-term goal is to discover prevention and therapeutic approaches for those hard-to-treat human diseases. ➤



DNA Repair

Colin Wu, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Biochemistry

Colin Wu, Ph.D., conducts lab research that focuses on the mechanisms of DNA repair. His lab is interested in understanding how repair proteins recognize and remove damaged DNA structures in human cells. Malfunctions of these proteins are associated with the early onset of genetic diseases including cancer and heart disease. However, there are many unclassified protein variants that have unknown health risks. Dr. Wu's long-term goal is to develop novel strategies to identify and stratify variants that are especially harmful. By accomplishing this, he aspires to enhance the fundamental understanding of DNA repair proteins and ultimately contribute to the development of targeted interventions and treatments. ➤

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.



Behavior Analysis

Michael Kranak, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor and Director of Research, Center for Autism

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) often engage in problem behavior, such as aggression or self-injury, to communicate their wants and needs. Michael Kranak, Ph.D., conducts translational and clinical research to help those individuals with IDD find their voice. Importantly, Dr. Kranak focuses on improving behavioral treatments for individuals with IDD so their treatment gains are long lasting in their natural environments, leading to the highest qualities of life possible. His work has been funded by both the NIH and contractually through local school districts. ➤

DEPARTMENTS WITH THE HIGHEST TOTAL FUNDING

COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

\$6.5M

CHEMISTRY

\$3.3M



Other departments that brought in over **\$1M** included Biological Sciences, Electrical and Computer Engineering and Mechanical Engineering



Neurovascular Injury

Amany Tawfik., M.D.
Associate Professor, Eye Research Institute

Amany Tawfik, M.D., studies molecular and cellular mechanisms of neurovascular injury in retinopathies, including diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration. In particular, the role of nutritional deficiencies, specifically folic acid and vitamin B12, and their relation with amino acid homocysteine in the impairment of vision. Dr. Tawfik uses basic research techniques to enhance the understanding of how elevated levels of homocysteine contribute to the development and progression of diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration, the most common causes of blindness worldwide. ➤

History

Erin Dwyer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, History

Erin Dwyer, Ph.D., is working on a project about slavery and poison in the Atlantic World, tentatively titled "Bitter to the Taste." It builds on her first book, "Mastering Emotions: Feelings, Power, and Slavery in the United States," to further explore the emotional politics of fear, focusing on enslaved poisoners in the United States and the Caribbean in the 18th and 19th centuries. "Bitter to the Taste" examines slaveholders' anxieties about being poisoned by those they enslaved, including how these real and imagined fears manifested in culture, laws, courtrooms, and daily interactions between slaveholders and enslaved people. ➤





Come TO CAMPUS

LEARN from innovative speakers at a lecture series.

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WATCH A PLAY performed by student acting majors.

CHEER ON your favorite Golden Grizzlies sports team.

TOUR THE HALLS of the historical Meadow Brook Estate.

Explore the variety of events on OU's campus at calendar.oakland.edu.



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ACADEMIC *Spotlight*

“

I ended up working with an organization in downtown Detroit that was operated by a physician from Henry Ford (Health System). He had transformed two RVs into mobile clinics ... and would drive from school-to-school, community centers, and so on, and provide care to kids.

”

NICHOLAS KONDOLEON, OUWB '20

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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.

'Leaning' Into Human Resources

When Elaina Bicego, SEHS '19, heard about the human resources development (HRD) program at OU, she was excited to have found a career path that was people-centered. Shortly before graduating, Bicego was offered a position as a quality engineer at J.G. Kern Enterprises, a local automotive supplier. In 2019, she earned a Bachelor of Science in HRD with minors in training and development and Lean leadership. Lean learning, a core concept explored in the program, employs tools, techniques and management philosophies to help streamline processes and optimize performance while eliminating waste. Bicego now serves as the associate vice president of people at LightGuide, Inc. Her responsibilities include all functions of human resources, such as recruitment, policy creation, compensation and benefits, wellness, employee engagement and culture. She credits her rapid success in the field to the strong education, career coaching and encouragement she received while at OU. ➤



Coming Full Circle

When beginning her undergraduate studies at OU, Nichole Allen, SEHS '97 and '20, was set on the field of psychology, but along the way, changed paths and earned a B.A. in education with a focus in social sciences in 1997. After nearly a two-decade hiatus to raise her three daughters, Allen returned to OU to fulfill her original dreams. In 2020, she completed her graduate work and earned a dual degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling. In the process, Allen was also able to inspire her three daughters. Not only are they earning college degrees, but two of the three have earned degrees from OU and the third is currently completing her master's degree at OU in a field none other than counseling. ➤



OU to Offer MAT in K-12 Special Education

The School of Education and Human Services now offers a Master of Arts in Teaching in K-12 special education program. The program is designed for individuals who hold a bachelor's degree and are now seeking a career in teaching K-12 special education. Students can choose between concentrations in emotional impairment (EI) or specific learning disabilities (LD). During the course of the cohort-based program, each participant will complete 100+ hours in a K-12 classroom (before student teaching) for real-world experience and a chance to put into practice what is learned in the program. After successful completion of the program, students will be eligible for a Michigan standard teaching certificate to teach special education (grades K-12) as well as a Master of Arts in Teaching degree. ➤



DPT Acute Care Simulation

Sara Arena, DPT, the director of physical therapy, is passionate about ensuring that Oakland University's Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students receive exemplary acute care knowledge and understanding. She, and a team of leaders, created the Physical Therapy Acute Care Simulations to enable OU DPT students to gain the required acute care/inpatient practice experience. The simulations consist of realistic, evidence-based patient case scenarios and experiential learning activities in order to provide a comprehensive and flexible learning encounter. In addition to lessening the burden on acute care site coordinators and clinical instructors by pre-training students, PT faculty identified improvements in student readiness and evaluations from DPT students now in their clinical rotations confirm this. It is anticipated that the project will continue to result in greater student success now and in the future, which will further enhance the already outstanding OU Physical Therapy program. ➤

CDS Prepares Students for Graduate School and Beyond

Dale Telgenhoff, Ph.D., coordinator and associate professor of Clinical and Diagnostic Sciences (CDS), strives to ensure that students are well-prepared for their careers, graduate school and beyond. The Bachelor of Science in CDS is structured so that students complete the foundational bachelor's requirements and a sequence of courses to specialize in a particular area. In addition to the broad range of options already offered, Dr. Telgenhoff recently developed two additional specializations, pre-pharmacy sciences and pre-physician assistant, to prepare students specifically for these post-graduate programs. His most recent accomplishment is the introduction of a new master's degree in CDS, and a bachelor's-master's combined program, to help enable career advancement of graduates and others in these fields. ➤



Master's in Interdisciplinary Health Care Systems

The Department of Interdisciplinary Health Sciences has evolved greatly since its inception and is now excited to offer their first master's degree. Led by Melissa Reznar, Ph.D., associate professor, the M.S. in interdisciplinary health care systems is a two-year, skills-based program built using reports of the critical competencies needed in health care professions. With three concentrations — Professional, Dietetics and Research — there are many career options to attract a variety of individuals and the program is applicable to many bachelor's degrees. This program is a good fit for employees interested in a master's degree, clinicians looking to move into an administrative role and graduates directly pursuing a master's in a variety of health areas. The well-rounded and extensive education in the area of health care and related fields will provide many opportunities for graduates. The program expects to enroll its first class in 2024. ➤

'Life-changing' scholarship

Constant improvement with an eye on the future has always been important to Dick Amacher — the most recent example found in a generous gift he and his wife gave to OUWB. It's a good example, he says, because the hope is to not only help the student who benefits from the gift — a full-ride scholarship — but also inspire others to follow suit. The key, he says, is for potential donors to realize just how much more leverage donations carry at OUWB and how much they mean to beneficiaries. "For OUWB, the marginal value of a donor's dollar is greater than it is at other schools," he says. "The money means more here than it does at Harvard." ➤



From left, Kevin Cervantes, Ben Cervantes, Liz Cervantes, and Trent Jackman.

A Serendipitous Reunion

When they graduated from Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine in 2021, no one could have imagined the life-or-death emergency that would one-day reunite Kevin Cervantes, M.D., OUWB '21, and Trent Jackman, M.D., OUWB '21. But that's exactly what happened in a Las Vegas hospital on Feb. 3, 2023. Cervantes's father, Ben, had a life-threatening emergency. By sheer coincidence, Jackman was on duty and saved Ben's life. The serendipitous reunion obviously had a big impact on all involved — and shows that the OUWB community extends well beyond the bounds of Southeast Michigan. "When I noticed it was Trent who was treating my father, that's when my stress levels went down significantly," says Kevin. ➤

Home Sweet Home

A chance encounter with an elementary-age student in Detroit may be a blip in the youngster's memory, but for Nicholas Kondoleon, M.D., OUWB '20, it was life-changing. The reason? Before the member of OUWB's Class of 2020 even started medical school, the interaction opened Kondoleon's eyes to the impact doctors can have in a community. It helped him make the decision to become a doctor — one who recently completed an internal medicine residency at Cleveland Clinic Foundation, and returned July 1 as a cardiology fellow at Corewell Health William Beaumont University Hospital in Royal Oak. To this day, says Kondoleon, he often thinks of the time he helped deliver desperately needed health care and winter clothes to the youngster and his mother. ➤



Preparing Tomorrow's Female Business Leaders — Today

The Women's Leadership and Mentor Program (WLMP) is dedicated to preparing female-identifying students for successful business careers. The program was started by Tiffany LeDonne-Smith, an academic adviser in the School of Business, who recognizes the need for a supportive space for female students as they enter male-dominated industries. Starting as a pilot program in 2019, the WLMP has since become an annual program, connecting professional mentors with undergraduate mentees throughout the course of an academic year. Mentors, many of whom are Oakland University alumni, provide guidance and support to students, helping them build confidence and connections within their chosen fields. The program includes monthly meetings between mentors and mentees, as well as leadership and personal development activities held as a group. The WLMP continues to have a positive impact on the professional careers and personal lives of its participants, fostering networking opportunities and equipping students with valuable real-world knowledge. ➤

Business Backup

In January 2023, the School of Business launched the Executives in Residence program, an initiative aimed at fostering meaningful connections between students and accomplished business executives. Under the leadership of Dean Chuck Pierce, this program has been designed to enhance the educational journey of OU business students by providing them with valuable mentorship from industry leaders. Through the program, students are carefully paired with Executives in Residence (EIRs) who generously share their real-world insights and offer professional guidance. Mentor-mentee meetings encompass a wide range of topics, including refining resumes and cover letters, exploring career paths and developing effective job search strategies. The program's success is evident in the meaningful connections forged between students and mentors, empowering students with beneficial insights and guidance for their educational and professional journeys. Through the program, business students become career-ready and professionally developed, ensuring their seamless transition from the educational realm to the professional world. ➤



SBA Students Set to ACHIEVE

For fifteen years, the School of Business' ACHIEVE program has empowered students with knowledge, skills, and competencies for personal and professional success, while fostering their growth and sense of belonging in their chosen field. Through a hybrid delivery model encompassing professional development workshops, online modules and industry engagement, this program, exclusive to OU's undergraduate business students, enhances their professional skills through activities like mock interviews, networking, resume coaching and personal brand development. Emphasizing career development, communication, equity and inclusion, the program incorporates engaging classwork and student events, such as the Spring 2023 Equity and Inclusion Capstone featuring Leader Dogs for the Blind, which provided students with DEI insights and valuable networking opportunities. ACHIEVE's important work couldn't be accomplished without the 300+ volunteers who have participated throughout the program's history. Their dedication has been vital to the program's effectiveness and success, making a significant impact on the students' professional and personal futures. ➤



Interconnected

There is a very special connection that human beings share with nature. It is a well-established fact that nature helps people relax, recharge and even remedy many diseases. A lesser-known fact, however, is that nature can also yield answers to pressing medical questions. In the last few decades, studies of maize genes have proven to be of a significant value to biomedical research, linking the genetic information that is found in a kernel of corn to understanding the human cell mutations responsible for various illnesses. To deepen the knowledge of maize genetics, with relevance to the etiology of human diseases, Shailesh Lal, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Bioengineering, is leading breakthrough research on the RNA Binding Motif Protein 48 (RBM48) gene, found in corn, and its connection to human cancer. ➤



In Control

Over the years, control systems employed by many industries have drastically changed to allow for more complex actions and nonlinear dynamics. To meet industry needs for controls able to accommodate complex behaviors that involve either dynamic or dangerous environments inaccessible to human intervention, Jun Chen, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, leads research on model predictive control (MPC) in automotive embedded systems. “Imagine walking in a dark room, attempting to make sense of the surroundings and predicting the best path to reach your goal — all while taking one step at a time and repeating the cycle. This seems rather inefficient. However, if one can receive ongoing directions, anticipating each step, the task can be performed rather quickly and efficiently. Model predictive control does exactly that. It is a multivariable control algorithm that computes optimal control inputs, based on predicted future outputs,” Dr. Chen says, while explaining the essence of MPC. ➤



Growing Smart

Ask Marouane Kessentini, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, how OU can be positioned as a leading institution for large-scale artificial intelligence (AI) research, and he is likely to have some answers. From creating the OU Artificial Intelligence Center (OUAI) and the NSF Center on Pervasive AI and organizing the first OU-IBM workshop, to hosting the 37th IEEE/ACM International Conference on Automated Software Engineering and enabling new partnerships with industry, Dr. Kessentini has been the driving force behind an array of initiatives, aimed at cultivating a robust AI research ecosystem at Oakland University. “Businesses and organizations that depend on software have to constantly fix bugs, add new features and improve their code. When new code is introduced, however, the solutions can be far from ideal. And after this process is repeated hundreds of times, the overall code can evolve into a giant tangle of rushed solutions that make future improvements increasingly more difficult. So, we need intelligent bots to fix the software used in all aspects of our society nowadays,” explains Dr. Kessentini. ➤



Welcoming Christopher Lance Coleman

Oakland University’s new dean of the School of Nursing, Christopher Lance Coleman, Ph.D., brings broad and distinctive experience in teaching, research and service. His extensive research has focused on health disparities tied to various behavioral clinical trials for sexual risk behaviors, as well as on symptom management strategies for people living with HIV/AIDS both domestic and international. Throughout a prolific and internationally recognized career, Dr. Coleman co-directed a health equity research center, trained post-doctoral fellows, published 50 journal articles, 32 abstracts and two books. The research establishing the foundation for this work has been supported by nearly \$8 million in grants from numerous organizations, including the National Institutes of Health. Additionally, he founded Indiana University’s three-campus LGBTQ Taskforce, which assesses DEI and LGBTQ matters and works to address them throughout the curriculum, recruitment initiatives and within the Office of Nursing research portfolio. ➤



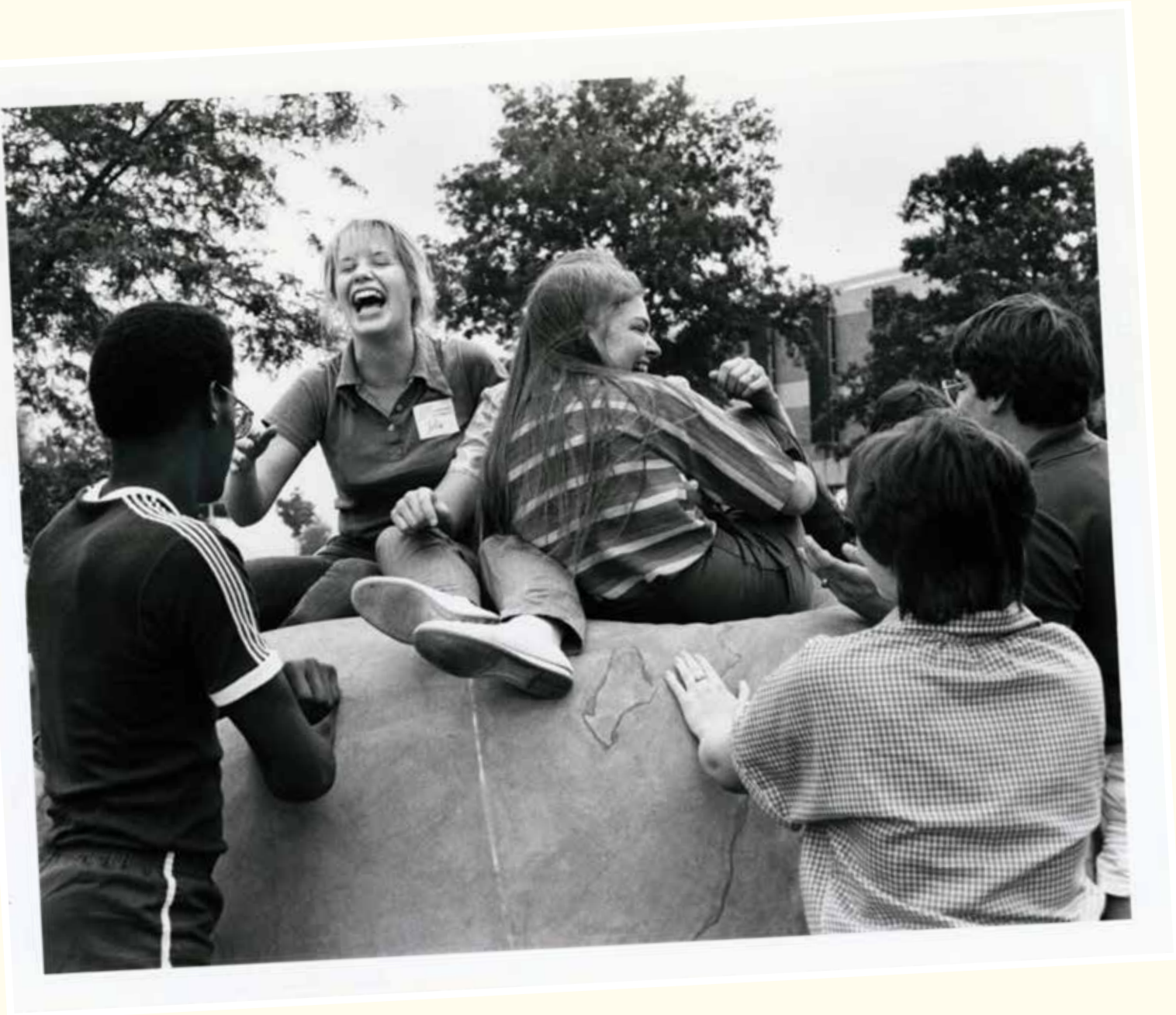
A Transformational Leader

Chantel Hammond, MSN, RN, AFN-C, SANE-A, SANE-P, SON '21, is a graduate of the Oakland University School of Nursing Forensic Nursing program. As a graduate of OU’s program, Hammond is educated to provide advanced nursing care for patients who are victims of intentional and unintentional trauma as well as all forms of violence and maltreatment. She has the ability to conduct medical-forensic exams, perform specialized exam techniques, collect evidence and testify in a court of law. Hammond’s graduate level education has prepared her to advance forensic nursing knowledge and science. “One of the things we focused on in the program was how to be a transformational leader,” Hammond says. ➤

Three-time School of Nursing Alum

As a young child, Farzana Noor, SON '14, '19 and '23, recognized the lack of health care service for non-English speaking families. Her decision to pursue a career in nursing was first inspired by what she saw going to doctor’s appointments with her family. “I realized early on that not having health care providers here that spoke Bangla made things very difficult both for my immediate and my extended family to obtain medical care,” she says. “I was eight, nine, ten years old having to translate for family members during their medical appointments.” Being able to make a difference in an underserved population and give back to the community has driven her passion to obtain her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. As a DNP, Noor possesses the highest level of nursing expertise and works in a pediatric clinical setting. She has the ability to influence health care outcomes through organizational leadership and direct patient care. ➤





New Student Orientation

On August 10, 1982, new students attending orientation participate in a variety of games, including one with a medicine ball, pictured here.

OU's yearly New Student Orientation event offers incoming students the ability to prepare and feel comfortable with campus. Today, the event is held in three parts to provide students with a memorable start to the school year. Learn more at oakland.edu/fyac/orientation/newstudents.



Explore the magic
of Meadow Brook Hall this
holiday season

November 24-December 30, 2023

Located on the campus of Oakland University, 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:

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- ❄ Holiday Walk OU Day: December 17

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Rooted, page 24

Traverse City area native McKenzie (Hartman) Gallagher, CAS '05, loves the views, the people and the community of the lakeside city she calls home. Deeply rooted in the region, she and her husband are raising their family and growing a business on the Gallagher family farm. ➤



