

[In Memoriam](#)[OU News](#)[OU
Magazine](#)[President's
Perspective](#)

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Newsletter

[NEED
TO KNOW](#)[WAYS TO
ENGAGE](#)[POINTS OF
PRIDE](#)[GRIZZ
FACTS](#)[IN THE
COMMUNITY](#)[GOOD
TO KNOW](#)

POINTS OF PRIDE

Points of Pride - November 23, 2020

[MUKHERJI, VILLA-DIAZ, CHINNAIYAN, ZHANG, NIH, NSF, T.LAB](#)

November 23, 2020

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Colleagues,

Oakland is increasingly being recognized for the outstanding quality of instruction that students receive from the university's outstanding faculty, but their exceptional work in the classroom is not all they contribute.

This Points of Pride edition highlights a few examples of just how effective and impactful our faculty members are in their work outside the classroom through activities including research and community engagement. This diversity of outstanding contributions reminds me of something the country music singer Naomi Judd said: "There are many paths but only one journey."



I am continually impressed and inspired by Oakland's journey toward making our world a better place for all

of us to enjoy and appreciate.

Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President

BLAZING NEW TRAILS

Dr. Nivedita Mukherji, associate dean and associate professor in the School of Business Administration, has been honored as a 2020 Trailblazer by t.Lab, a high performance learning laboratory serving Greater Detroit students in grades pre-kindergarten through the college undergraduate level.



One of nine individuals being recognized this year, Mukherji has served as a catalyst and facilitator of t.Lab's Advanced Math Curriculum, as well as provided more than 20 t.Lab students opportunities to attend international business summer camp.

Mukherji is also being recognized for both the regional and global impact of her work, which comes as a result of her strong commitment to enabling students to achieve world-class education standards within the U.S. and especially within the African American Community.

EXPLORING NEW WONDERS

Three Oakland University faculty members have been awarded prestigious research grants over the last year, and all support ambitious work to significantly advance the quality of life for people throughout the world.



Prakash Chinnaiyan, M.D., an Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology and an expert in the treatment of brain and spine cancer won a five-year, \$1.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to study an aggressive brain cancer with limited treatment options.

Assistant Professor of Biology **Luis Villa-Diaz, Ph.D.** was awarded a \$550,178 National Science Foundation grant to advance his research on the potential for stem cells to change their identity and become specialized, differentiated cells – a process that has significant implications for regenerative medicine.



Wei Zhang, Ph.D., assistant professor of physics, won the National Science Foundation's Faculty Early Career Development Program Award, the organization's most prestigious honor presented to young faculty. The five-year \$500,000 grant is being used to explore how a material's quantum properties might be used to revolutionize electronic device performance.
