

GOLDEN GRIZZLIES COMMUNITY LETTER

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

Dear Golden Grizzlies,

As I stroll our beautiful campus and meet so many of you — students, faculty, staff and alums — I am reminded daily that Oakland's greatest strength is its people. United in our purpose, we continue to prioritize community, collaboration and excellence, and together we are building a future full of promise for OU.

Renaming the Honors College

Recently, I have been inspired by two historic examples of our community members propelling our university forward. First, two of OU's most loyal and generous supporters, Donna and Walt Young, made a **\$10 million gift to rename our Honors College**. Now called the Donna and Walt Young Honors College, this transformational act of philanthropy has created the first named school in Oakland's history — a name that reflects our shared commitment to advancing student success and academic excellence.

The Youngs have long invested their time, talent and treasure to support OU and its students. Walt joined the OU Foundation Board in 1997, while Donna helped found our Women and Philanthropy group. They also created the Donna and Walt Young Study Abroad Endowed Scholarship, which has already enabled hundreds of Honors students to experience the world, grow as global citizens and develop the interdisciplinary vision needed to serve as leaders.

Now, with their newest gift, the Youngs have created an endowment that will advance the success of Honors students for generations to come, empowering them to be innovative researchers, creative practitioners and civic trailblazers of the highest order. We are so grateful for the Youngs' generosity, wisdom and friendship — and for their unwavering belief in our students and our mission. Thank you also to Dean Graeme Harper, under whose leadership the college has thrived.

Advancing student athlete success

Last week, we celebrated another milestone with the opening of our new Basketball Practice Facility, which reflects our larger Strategic Vision commitment to student success. Through the Champions initiative, we are empowering student athletes to achieve excellence, earn degrees and build a bright future. And we are providing them with the resources they need to grow and compete at the highest levels of collegiate athletics.

The new practice facility will help deliver on our commitment to excellence with such features as a regulation-size practice court, locker rooms, a team lounge, a training room, a film room and coaches offices. I can't wait to see how it elevates the student athlete experience and look forward to another great season of Golden Grizzlies basketball!





I am grateful to everyone in our community who helped bring this project to life, including our trustees, university leadership and so many staff from athletics, finance and facilities. A special shout-out to Coach Greg Kampe who has long advocated for this facility. Greg understood that Oakland Athletics already had exceptional support and an impressive track record. Now, with this outstanding training facility, we are better positioned to recruit and prepare the best of the best.

Driving excellence

Our forward momentum,



including along key pathways of our Strategic Vision, continues to gain recognition beyond our campus. This year, the Wall Street Journal once again recognized our efforts to provide students with high-value, life-changing opportunities in its 2026 Best Colleges in the U.S. rankings. Key highlights include:

- **Social Mobility:** No. 2 public in Michigan; 94th nationally
- **Best Value:** No. 4 public in Michigan; 124th nationally
- **Salary:** No. 4 public in Michigan; 169th nationally

These results send a clear and powerful message: an Oakland education transforms lives and offers a meaningful return on investment. My heartfelt thanks to our dedicated faculty and staff whose excellence and commitment help make these achievements possible.

This month, we also achieved provisional accreditation for our new Master of Physician Assistant Science Program, allowing us to admit our inaugural class beginning in the winter 2026 semester. Connected to our Strategic Vision's Academic Excellence initiative, this milestone creates new pathways for our students to enter rewarding, high-demand careers in healthcare. Indeed, physician assistants consistently rank among the top professions for career growth and job satisfaction.



Even more good news came recently when the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency **awarded us gold status** for the ninth consecutive year — the highest recognition for service to student veterans. This honor reflects the extraordinary commitment of our Veteran Support Services team to help our student veterans meet their academic and personal goals. We are all truly inspired by these students — and honored to serve them, just as they have served our country.

Finally, I am thrilled that Oakland University was appointed **vice-chair for partnership and outreach** of the United Nations Academic Impact Sustainable Development Goals hub for clean water and sanitation. A key UN official and OU alum, Robert Skinner, said we were selected from over 300 universities and colleges worldwide because of our “long-standing focus on water-related education and hands-on research, including extensive work in the OU Campus Biopreserve and collaborations with regional partners such as the Clinton River Watershed Council.”

This recognition underscores our commitment to advancing sustainability and international engagement — and affirms our place among the global institutions working together toward a more sustainable future. Special thanks to the offices of the Provost and Global Engagement, which have helped drive this project forward — and to professors Scott Tiegs and Nicole Wagner who were instrumental in securing this appointment.

In closing

I hope you will continue to follow our progress at this year's State of the University, which will be **delivered in a new format**. Between October 22 and 29, Oakland University leadership will gather their respective teams for a discussion on the state of the university. The conversation will be in response to the video, "Oakland University: Where You Belong," and the State of the University report, both of which will be available on the President's website starting Oct. 22.

We have so much to celebrate at OU because of all of you — our amazing students, faculty, staff and alums who are forging a future full of possibility. Thank you for demonstrating confidence in our bright tomorrow through every act of learning, teaching research and service. Let's continue moving forward with this confidence and purpose. And please follow me on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#), where I love to celebrate our community.

Sincerely,

Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President
Oakland University