

## PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

# PIONEER CLUB AT SUNSET TERRACE

**July 18, 2023**

- In gathering at Sunset Terrace, we are surrounded by history...
- ...and it's a history that continues to inform the purpose and path of Oakland University.
- This home was designed as the retirement and guest house for Alfred and Matilda Wilson, our visionary and great benefactors.
- For a about a decade, from 1953 to 1962, the Wilsons found a sense of calm and peace here at Sunset Terrace....which they used as a retirement home.
- They not only bequeathed this beautiful home.... but endowed us with their legacy and commitment to the transformative power of education.
- After the Wilsons, this home was used by our first chancellor Woody Varner and other presidents.
- In case you're wondering... there are 20 rooms spread over 12,587 square feet.
- Dan and I moved into Sunset Terrace in 2018....and I brought my furniture and art collection.
- You might have guessed that the house is a prairie home design, and modeled after houses designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.
- Among its many features... and what I enjoy most...is the use of glass and the series of arcs and circles that evoke an appreciation for the beautiful surrounding natural landscape.
- The name... Sunset Terrace...is a poetic reference that reflects what the architects found as the optimal site on Meadow Brook Estate to appreciate the setting sun.
- Personally, whether we are entertaining, hosting a special occasion or relaxing after work, Dan and I find Sunset Terrace provides inspiration and sense of purpose...it is a symbol of the many positive virtues of the university.
- When we gather at Sunset Terrace, we are often overwhelmed by the sense of community, common purpose and affection

for Oakland University.

- Tonight is one of those occasions.
- If I had to change anything about Sunset Terrace, it might be a bit of an edit to the name... Rather than “sunset” I like the reference of a “rising sun” .... for the days ahead for Oakland University are bright and promising.
- As faculty and staff you played a central part of the emergence of Oakland...
- And now, as retirees your role has transformed into an ambassador for the university...
- You are always a central part of the OU community... and we greatly appreciate your passion and dedication to make sure we live up to our mission.
- As you know, universities around the country struggled during the pandemic and with a downturn in enrollment. Fewer students meant less revenue.
- In response, Oakland – like every university – went through a budgetary belt-tightening.
- Meanwhile, we also led a statewide campaign to increase state funding.
- Along with sound fiscal management, this year’s state appropriation raises the bar on the level of public funding and positions us for strategic growth.
- In response, we are in the process of rethinking our strategic vision through 2030.
- In the upcoming months, we will present an innovative plan based on student success, community engagement, DEI, research and sustainability...
- Collectively, these strategic goals will provide focus and a strong direction that will further elevate Oakland University and deepen our impact on students, faculty, staff and the communities we serve.
- I want to take a few moments to give you an overview of some of the many exciting developments at Oakland...
- Construction is progressing rapidly on South Foundation Hall, a place where all students during their time at OU have attended class.
- Classrooms and rehearsal space are being added to Varner Hall, and when the renovation is completed, Oakland will offer performing arts students a more enriching learning experience.
- A state-of-the art Welcome Center is also planned to complement Meadow Brook Hall, one of the country’s cultural jewels.

- A new façade and renovated interior at O'Dowd Hall will make the OUWB Medical School a distinctive campus landmark.
- Several months ago, the engineering research building opened, where our talented faculty are collaborating with a range of industries.
- Our School of Engineering is collaborating with the College for Creative Studies and a list of innovative corporations in a highly immersive augmented reality center – one of the many ways we are keeping up with the educational needs of today's students.
- Our west campus, which features an expansive 140,000-square-foot building, strategically positions OU as a talent pipeline for the region's healthcare industry.
- We have partnered with Corewell on a nearly \$21M in scholarships to attract and graduate nurses, and a few months ago, we announced a partnership with Easterseals MORC to increase the number of social workers in the region.
- And for our demonstrable commitment to sustainability, the Oakland University Credit Union gave us a \$1M gift to be used to making OU a leading sustainable campus and a vital source for sustainability expertise to serve our communities.
- While we must continue to become a responsive and engaged university, there is no looking past that our greatest strength is the people who believe in the power of education.... knowledge... integrity... respect for diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice.
- As retired faculty and staff, each of you represents these values... and because you will always be an essential part of the OU community....each of you play a vital role in the unfolding history of Oakland University.
- We look forward to your presence on campus... at events... concerts...exhibits... symposiums....and at Sunset Terrace.
- Thank you for your dedication and for playing a central in our history and success.