

Presidential Remarks

Leadership Day highlights contributions of staff; explores recommendations to develop campus culture

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Sept 9 forum connects OU Leadership Team and Leadership Academy members

Fostering collaboration and deepening connections among students, faculty and staff are top priorities for the upcoming academic year, said OU President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz.

“We’ve all been through so much since the onset of the pandemic,” she said. “As we prepare for fall semester, we must reflect on how we can strengthen the bonds of our campus community. To be responsive and supportive of each other, we must listen and work together to build a collaborative, dynamic campus culture.”

As one of the upcoming initiatives that explore workplace issues, faculty and staff concerns and subsequent policy responsiveness, the president will host “OU Leadership Day: Reconnecting to OU’s Mission and Values.”

The forum will be held Friday, September 9, and include the president, cabinet members and key leadership team members along with staff who advanced through Leadership Academy, a program that fosters leadership skills for those with aspirations for career development and greater responsibility at the university. Approximately 100 Leadership Academy members are expected to participate at OU Leadership Day.

The Leadership Academy takes a holistic approach to develop staff members’ leadership capacity. The training is based on research from the fields of management, organizational behavior and psychology. For the past few years, the academy has been led by Michelle Hammond, and Greg Thrasher, faculty members in the Department of Management and Marketing.

Professors Hammond and Thrasher will be the moderators at OU Leadership Day.

“Bringing OU leadership together with Leadership Academy members is one step in the process of building open dialogue and collaboration,” said Professor Hammond. “The key is for us to recognize, support, and empower each other to realize our shared vision of a healthy and dynamic campus culture.”

A rigorous discussion about developing campus culture requires a sense of shared responsibility, said Professor Thrasher.

“A takeaway from the forum will be a common vision of Oakland University that is real for each person, and that is accomplished by having a sense of ownership and a role in creating a positive culture,” he said.

Subsequent to the OU Leadership Day, a formal report of key concerns and possible solutions will be submitted by Leadership Academy members to the president. That report is expected by the end of fall semester.

Since 2016, the Leadership Academy has drawn on the expertise of 16 participants enrolled each year in the program. Employees collaborate in drafting white papers that assess pressing workplace concerns, and offer data-driven approaches to address the issues. In the past year, Leadership Academy members drafted reports on retaining talent; reinvigorating the workforce; reconnecting with students, faculty and staff; and, re-engaging with the external community.

Leadership Day is among several upcoming proposals from “Reimagining OU,” a presidential initiative that addresses ways to enhance Oakland University’s culture, elevate the university’s role as a steward of place, and explore ideas to best position OU for the challenges ahead.

Beginning in September, President Pescovitz will meet monthly with faculty and staff in small groups at venues around campus. The meetings, entitled, “Conversations,” are intended to be informal discussions that foster improved communications among faculty, staff and administrators.

On September 13, President Pescovitz will present her “Welcome to OU” address. The speech will introduce themes and a vision for the upcoming academic year. The speech will be held in the Habitat at the Oakland Center.

In October, the university will celebrate Sustainability Month. The purpose is to elevate campus-wide awareness of the immediate need to become a more sustainability university and society. Events will feature sustainability projects, faculty lectures and an appeal to broaden campus participation in the university’s sustainability efforts.

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