

Presidential Remarks

OU President's contract extended

April 12, 2021

ROCHESTER HILLS, Mich. – The Oakland University Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve a three-year contract extension for President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D., who began her tenure in July, 2017. The contract runs through June, 2025.

“We are very fortunate to have President Pescovitz leading Oakland University,” said Oakland University Board Chair Tonya Allen. “Her relentless drive, engaging personality and uncompromising vision make her an inspirational and extremely effective leader.”

Among the notable qualities that have distinguished President Pescovitz’s term at OU, according to Allen, is her commitment to supporting students and faculty, an innovative approach to making sure OU is prepared for the challenges of a fast-changing higher education landscape, and her dedication to diversity and social justice.

“My time as president at Oakland has been one of the greatest privileges of my life,” said President Pescovitz. “I am humbled by the endorsement from the board of trustees, and I am excited about the promise of a university with limitless potential. I look forward to working closely with our faculty, students and staff to find innovative ways to make sure Oakland evolves continually as a vibrant and thriving higher education community.”

Beginning her tenure nearly four years ago with a campus listening tour, President Pescovitz has forged an inimitable style that is highly accessible, optimistic, engaging, and she admits, demanding. At her first address to campus as the university's seventh president, President Pescovitz summed up her vision in what has now become an oft- repeated phrase on campus: “At Oakland, we aspire to excellence.”

Before COVID-19 restrictions last March, she was a regular attendee at Grizzly basketball games, concerts, plays and campus events. As social distancing and assembly restrictions are lifted, President Pescovitz – who takes pride in the moniker “Momma Bear” -- pledges that she will, once again, be a fixture at OU gatherings.

Oakland’s accomplishments during President Pescovitz’s time at the helm include:

- Elevating the priority on diversity, equity and inclusion as among the university’s strategic goals.
- Launching the largest fundraising campaign in OU history.
- Overall increase in graduation rates.

- Creating programs that address student debt and aim to keep students on the path to attaining their degrees.
- Leading a statewide campaign for funding equity for Oakland and other public universities.
- Cultivating Oakland as a global campus, and raising the priority for students and faculty to be engaged in their communities.
- Initiating “Reimagining OU,” an ongoing effort to translate input from faculty and staff into transforming Oakland into “the university of choice.”
- Overseeing the physical evolution of the campus, including new construction and significant improvements to classroom buildings and infrastructure.
- Navigating Oakland through the pandemic, and earning national recognition for OU as a leading advocate for students’ health and safety.
- Serving on a range of boards, including Priority Health, Michigan Association of State Universities (where she is chair), Horizon League, Detroit Drives Degrees Leadership Council (co-chair), and Detroit Economic Club (executive committee).

With personal gifts and commitments to OU surpassing \$750,000 during her four-year tenure, President Pescovitz has contributed to multiple areas throughout campus and annually supports the faculty and staff giving campaign through a challenge gift. Of note, she has created and funded three distinct endowments in honor of her mother (focus on biomedical ethics), her parents (focus on diverse faculty support), and her children (focus on student global engagement).

“The best leaders inspire not just through words, but more importantly by their actions,” said OU Vice President for Advancement Michael Westfall. “President Pescovitz’s significant personal philanthropy, tireless external engagement, and unwavering commitment to securing resources for OU students and programs are testaments to her leadership.”

According to her contract, President Pescovitz receives an annual salary of \$483,170. However, in FY2021, she took a voluntary 20-percent pay reduction as part of addressing the budget shortfall caused by the effects from COVID-19. The president, who lives at the on-campus presidential house, Sunset Terrace, receives a monthly car allowance.

Prior to coming to Oakland University, President Pescovitz was senior vice president and U.S. medical leader for BioMedicines at Eli Lilly and Co.; and, CEO and vice president of medical affairs at Michigan Medicine (then known as the University of Michigan Health System) from 2009 to 2014. During her tenure at UM, she oversaw \$3.3 billion in revenue and \$490 million in research funding.

She has also served as Executive Associate Dean for Research Affairs at the Indiana University School of Medicine, President and CEO of Riley Hospital for Children, and interim Vice President for Research Administration at Indiana University.

President Pescovitz is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine.

She is a proud mother to three children, three in-law children, and five grandchildren.

#