

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES; RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS ELEVATE OU'S REPUTATION

April 25, 2024

On Thursday-Saturday and next week at OUWB graduation, we honor our graduates (undergrads, grad school and medical school students) in commencement ceremonies that bring together family, friends and colleagues in a fall-and-spring ritual that is never taken for granted or considered perfunctory, and is anything but routine.

The commencement ceremonies are a symbol of our shared belief that higher education is the pathway to opportunity, progress and a civil society. As we celebrate the completion of one stage along our students' life path, we also acknowledge the special time of beginning a new journey. We are so proud that our graduates have chosen an Oakland University education, and we welcome them proudly into our alumni family.

Our graduates enter the workplace and begin their careers knowing their "educational investment" will pay dividends for years. Oakland ranks the first among public universities in Michigan for enhancing students' social mobility, and as the best value for investment, according to The Wall Street Journal. And, Oakland is second only after U-M Ann Arbor in preparing students for careers.

Please join me in congratulating recipients of Oakland's prestigious student awards, including Kyle David Spengler, who received the Alfred G. Wilson Award for superior academic and co-curricular achievement; Destiny Imani Lashay Williams, who received the Matilda R. Wilson Award for her contributions as a scholar, leader and responsible citizen of the university community; and, Aisha Zanib, who received the Human Relations Award, for her outstanding contribution to intergroup understanding and conflict resolution.

Also, I am extremely proud to report that our Oakland University community is expanding, attracting more supporters. The most impressive sign of our increasing support is the success of the "Aspire. Advance. Achieve." campaign. In surpassing the \$150M goal six months ahead of schedule, we attracted donations from nearly 20,000 unique donors. The funds support student success initiatives, scholarships, and endowments.

As further proof of Oakland's timely outreach, the university received a Carnegie Community Engagement designation that affirms the important work of the OU-Pontiac Initiative, and offers encouragement to bolster our efforts. The national status confirms the hard work of our community engagement team, and faculty working to improve education, public health, civic participation, economic development and workforce readiness in communities throughout the region.

As we head into summer, we look back at a year of outstanding athletic achievement for OU teams.

We are proud to claim the winningest athletic program in the Horizon League. Congratulations to conference champions, including Women's Cross Country Team, Men's Swimming & Diving Team, Women's Swimming & Diving Team, Men's Soccer Team, Women's Golf Team, and, of course, the Men's Basketball Team, which brought nation-wide attention to Oakland, and gave us thrills, and an upset victory for the ages.

Garden of Imagination

As many students and faculty prepare for their summer respite, I'd like to point to a subtle, but powerful statement that will be planted outside of Varner Hall.

In the State of the University in September, we discussed how we must face the future with a collaborative spirit, openness and an appreciation for what we can imagine for our beloved university. As a symbol of our common purpose and need to rely on each other, the facilities department has created the "Garden of Imagination." We hope this summer that students, faculty and staff will come to campus and enjoy the inspiring site.

Finally, thank you to our wonderful faculty and staff members for your dedication to teaching, research and serving OU and the broader community, and for being the engine that moves the university forward.

And, of course, thank you to our students for granting us the privilege to serve them.

In gratitude,

Ora

Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.

Oakland University, President