

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

CONTRIBUTIONS OF OU WOMEN IN RESEARCH

March 7, 2024

One of the most comfortable places for me is to be among researchers. As some of you may know, before I went over to the dark side in university administration, I was a pediatric endocrinologist and researcher.

By nature, we researchers are curious.

By profession, we researchers are exacting, persistent and hold ourselves to the highest standard of intellectual inquiry and scholarship.

I like to think we are a rare... and very, very, very special breed.

There is no more valuable role at a university than the explorations undertaken by researchers for the purpose of gaining new scientific knowledge that benefits our health, the environment, and the way we conduct business, government and our lives.

The history of innovation and breakthroughs made possible by research is the history of progress.

Oakland now ranks 233 among 637 U.S. universities in research expenditures, a 44-place rise in the ranks in a year. The list is included in the National Science Foundation's Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey.

Since fiscal year 2020, our research expenditures have increased from \$12.9M to \$38M. The higher expenditures and ranking underscore the impact of your research, and highlights how research is among our guiding principles as we navigate the university amid the many changes occurring throughout higher education.

We celebrate "women in research" here at Oakland University a day before International Women's Day. The combined effect of honoring those here and acknowledging the accomplishments of women around the world is an opportunity to reflect on the importance of women's leadership in science and research.

We are researchers. Driven by data. Compelled to be collegial and transparent in our work. We are passionate that our research will make a positive difference in our fields, in our communities, and in the world.

With that in mind, there's no looking past the gender disparity that persists in research fields in the U.S., and around the world. According to the *UNESCO Science Report: The Race Against Time for Smarter Development (2021)*, one in three researchers is a woman.

Overall, according to the report, “female researchers tend to have shorter, less well-paid careers. Their work is underrepresented in high-profile journals and they are often passed over for promotion. Women are typically given smaller research grants than their male colleagues and earn less recognition from their peers: only 12 percent of members of national science academies are women.”

At Oakland, it is among our highest priorities to create opportunities for women in science.... It’s an investment in the present, and a step toward empowering the next generation of female researchers.

As we honor women in research, I’d like to just point out a few of the compelling conclusions cited by WomenLift Health, an international organization working for gender equality in leadership roles.

Gender-diverse institutions are more likely to outperform those that are not gender diverse. In general, women leaders exhibit transformational traits, such as working with others beyond their immediate self-interest to identify needed change and create collective action.

And more women in leadership contributes to the “role model effect,” where young women see women in leadership positions as role models.

Of course, you are not just role models because you are women. You are role models because of your excellent work as researchers. And your work is at the heart of what makes Oakland a university that is making a difference in the lives of students and in our communities.