

**FALL COMMENCEMENT REMARKS**

**President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz**

**December 5, 2020**

- **Congratulations graduates...**
  
- **You know at commencement ceremonies, I always look forward to seeing the unique faces of the graduates.**
  
- **I always appreciate that look of achievement, purpose, and, yes, relief.**
  
- **Today, we meet virtually because these are not ordinary times, but you – all of you, who have shown great perseverance and pride – are no ordinary graduates.**
  
- **You succeeded during what will be recorded as one of the most difficult social and economic periods in our history.**
  
- **I wish I could see each and every one of your faces.**
  - **I wish I could shake your hands.**

- **I also miss seeing the expressions on the faces of your friends, family members and parents, many of them who also share in your sense of achievement, and yes, relief.**

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- **Years and months ago, when we all thought of this moment, we figured we would be crowded into the O'rena in a very un-socially distanced way, surrounded by other graduates as they took their assigned place in a sea of black and gold.**
- **But life is filled with unexpected moments.**
  - **And the change of venue does not diminish this day – your day – when we come together to celebrate your great accomplishment.**
- **On this day, make sure you take many photos. The images will last a lifetime.**
  - **And so, too, will the building blocks of a lifetime of learning.**

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- **Every commencement ceremony should be a moment of idealism and optimism.**
  
- **Today is no different.**
  
- **All of us here at Oakland University, from the staff to administrators to the faculty, believe in you, and know you are up to the challenge of what lies ahead.**
  
- **If you are like me, then you should look at these past nine months as delivering a resounding lesson.**
  - **What is that lesson?**
  - **Look around.**
  - **The lesson is clear: Never take life, your health, your family, your friends and the moment of opportunity for granted.**
  
- **What you will do with your degree in hand will be essential as you find your way through life.**

- **And as you travel along your path, remember: How you deal with the unexpected says as much or more about you than how you react to the predictable and mundane.**
  
- **I'd also like to consider the challenges we face in these times of pandemic. Ask yourself:**
  - **How can I do my part to help? Perhaps it's someone you love, and perhaps it's someone you don't know.**
  
- **And today, take a moment to think of yourselves as capable of doing the extraordinary.**
  
- **Generations that have gone before you have also been defined by challenging times.**
  - **Some by war.**
  - **Some by economic depression.**
  - **Some by the struggle for Civil Rights and human dignity.**
  
- **Each generation has a defining moment where they have risen to the challenge.**

- **Your time is now.**
- **And I know you will succeed.**
  
- **Remember your perseverance and dedication during these difficult days has been an inspiration to many of us.**
  
- **And today, you become part of a proud tradition – the OU tradition.**
  
- **Congratulations.... We are so proud of you.**