



BARRIER BREAKER

THE JOURNEY TO BUILDING CULTURAL COMPETENCE ON CAMPUS AND BEYOND

GOODWILL SHINES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19



When a promotion led to a work relocation with FCA, **Rachel Wiltgen** remained on track with her Oakland University MBA thanks to a full suite of online courses. In a new management role that involves more travel, Rachel appreciates the convenient access to Oakland's accredited curriculum and quality faculty that is helping her prepare for continued advancement.

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ON THE COVER

Blake Bonkowski, CAS '14, found an inclusive community at Oakland University, where he was able to learn about and understand his FTM (female to male) trans identity. Pg 14

Photo by Robert Hall

OU Magazine reflects the University's goals, revealing articles that explore the fostering of student success and value of an OU degree, the discovery and utilization of knowledge through research, the efforts in expanding community relationships, and the advancement in diversity, equity and inclusion. Each issue will focus on one of these vital initiatives and the strides being made as the university of choice.

© Robert Hall

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



We are in the midst of a once-in-a-hundred-year public health threat. As the coronavirus pandemic impacts every aspect of our lives, we are committed to the core values that distinguish Oakland University. The values of integrity, collaboration and respect inform our decisions and provide a clear vision on the path ahead.

The OU Magazine summer issue's theme of diversity, equity and inclusion is at the heart of our identity and culture, and among the pillars of our mission. We are extremely proud that our talk of diversity is backed up with commitment and action as measured by the expanding diversity and inclusivity of a broadening range of students, scholars, faculty and staff.

Our overall underrepresented minority (URM) employee headcount URM students has grown steadily. At 52.7 percent, women make up the majority of the faculty. Furthermore, seeking greater diversity remains a central principle in faculty search committees, and in developing diversity fellow positions. I am also proud that Oakland University is ranked as the most LGBTQ-friendly campus in the state of Michigan, and that this university is so deeply committed to ensuring a diverse, welcoming and collaborative environment.

Raising awareness and providing training to faculty, staff and students are fundamental to our success in building a diverse and inclusive campus. The result has been an ongoing, open and productive dialogue that has had a transformative impact on the OU community.

At OU, we believe diversity and inclusion are fundamental to creating greater access to education, and thereby, assuring better economic and career opportunities to every person, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or political persuasion.

The stories in the pages ahead provide many examples of how Oakland University is distinguishing itself as the University of Choice.

Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President

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Oakland University is an equal opportunity and affirmative action institution.

MISSION

Oakland University cultivates the full potential of a diverse and inclusive community. As a public doctoral institution, we impact Michigan and the world through education, research, scholarship and creative activity.

VISION

Oakland University will unlock the potential of individuals and leave a lasting impact on the world through the transformative power of education and research.

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GOODWILL SHINES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

This is a historic time in our world. The unprecedented nature of the recent COVID-19 pandemic has forced people to change the way they work, learn, shop and communicate. But, in these unique times, true character emerges. A new COVID-19 Response online magazine was developed to share stories of the remarkable unity, strength, ingenuity and goodwill within the Oakland University community. 🌟

Discover these inspirational stories at oakland.edu/covid19response.

Oakland University is a nationally recognized public, doctoral research university located on 1,443 acres of scenic land in the cities of Rochester Hills and Auburn Hills in Oakland County, Michigan. The University enrolls more than 19,000 students and offers more than 275 bachelor's and graduate degree and certificate programs.



WE
miss you!



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS



Photos provided by Oakland University Archives and Special Collections

Institutions of higher learning are not immune to the plight of cultural intolerance. But, as educators of tomorrow’s leaders, Oakland University is determined to confront implicit bias, teach acceptance and create a community of inclusivity. The university strives to “advance diversity, equity and inclusion in an environment of mutual trust and respect at all levels of the institution and facilitate opportunities and success for all community members,” as established in the Oakland University Strategic Plan, Goal four. This drive to instill these principles in students, faculty, staff and community can be seen throughout OU’s existence.



When the university was founded in 1957 by Matilda Dodge Wilson, the Rochester area was rural, dominated by farmland. Two years later, Oakland's first international student enrolled at the university, and leadership began recognizing the value of diversifying campus. In the early 60s, the university's female population created the Associated Women Students of Michigan State University–Oakland, which aimed to promote unity among female students and help develop qualities of leadership.

In 1968, the civil unrest of race relations spilled over on OU with the fatal shooting of Isaac Jones, Oakland's first black student graduate, at a local gas station. Chancellor D.B. "Woody" Varner, along with his colleague Manuel Pierson, Ph.D., and other leaders on campus, began actively pursuing ways to offer support and greater opportunities on campus for underrepresented minorities.

"It is my hope for each of you," Varner remarked at OU's spring 1969 commencement, "... that as you move to positions of influence in the affairs of man, you will give a new and vital meaning to those words which have for too long been hollow rhetoric — the words justice, freedom, liberty, equality, human dignity. These must be the birthright and the property rights of all men, and to make this so is your high calling, your assignment, your mission above all others."

As a result, the university hired more faculty and staff of color, as well as implemented an aggressive outreach effort to Pontiac and other underrepresented communities with robust recruitment and bridge programs. This helped pave the way for creating greater diversity and inclusivity on campus over the next several decades.

During the 70s, the International Students and Scholars Office was established, as well as the recognition of Hispanic heritage with the university's first "La Raza Day," bringing Latino high school students to campus. In the spring of 1983, OU had its inaugural Handicapped Awareness Week event, while the 90s paved the way for the LGB community with the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Equal Opportunity Policy for students. In 2006, the university honored the Asian-American community with a celebration to recognize the uniqueness of Asian cultures, including Russia, Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. In the 2010s, the Center for Multicultural Initiatives began a new program — Collectively Oakland Retains Everyone (CORE) — to help first-year working-class and other minority students succeed at Oakland University.

"As evidenced by President Pescovitz's action to establish diversity, equity and inclusion as a strategic goal for the university," says Glenn McIntosh, vice president for student affairs and chief

diversity officer, "it is recognized that cultivating all types of diversity and demonstrating inclusion is essential to exemplifying the mission and values of our campus community. We continue to make visible and measurable progress."

McIntosh has been with the university for more than two decades, and recalls a variety of points of pride in OU's commitment to building cultural competence:

- The Center for Multicultural Initiatives (CMI) — formerly the Office of Minority Equity — was established in 1994. McIntosh was the first full-time director.
- The national award-winning Oakland University Trustee Academic Success (OUTAS) program was established in 1995.
- In 2005, the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) was opened. Since then, a number of accomplishments, such as same-sex benefits, became a realization.
- OU has been rated the overall most LGBTQ-friendly university in Michigan by the Campus Pride Index. And, in 2018, the GSC office space was renovated and expanded.
- The Veterans Support Services (VSS) office was established in 2009. In 2018, the office received a new location with greater resources to meet student veterans needs.
- Oakland has been deemed a "Military Friendly School" for six consecutive years, moving up to gold status last year.
- The number of underrepresented minority students (URMs), particularly African American and Hispanic, have significantly increased over the past decade. Additionally, the achievement gap has decreased from 30 percent to 11 percent.
- The number of minority faculty has increased, and a provost diversity faculty fellow position and a post-doctorate fellowship program were created.
- The university is actively supporting underrepresented minorities and underrepresented groups through employee resource groups.
- Individuals with disabilities continue to be a major focus. OU has made campus facilities to accommodate students with mobility challenges, addressed restroom accessibility challenges and enhanced exam proctoring services.

Moving forward, McIntosh seeks to build upon these programs and establish more collaborative, university-wide efforts in support of gender, race, religion, thought, ethnicity, sexual orientation, veteran status, and persons with disabilities. ➤

Discover more at oakland.edu/diversity.



Facing our TRUTH

By Adam DePollo © JLB Boone Photography

The School of Music, Theatre and Dance (SMTD) presented the production “Facing Our Truth: Ten Minute Plays on Trayvon, Race, and Privilege,” to invite thoughtful discussion on implicit bias.

The play series — originally produced for the New Black Fest, a festival showcasing work by theater artists from throughout the Black diaspora — consists of six works by different playwrights. The plays reflect on race, implicit bias, police brutality, and other themes that rose to prominence in national discourse following the 2012 killing of unarmed teenager, Trayvon Martin, by a neighborhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, and Zimmerman’s subsequent acquittal on murder charges.

The performance was delivered by students enrolled in “Company Class,” a unique course taught by guest lecturer, Kelli Crump. Unlike traditional theater productions where sets, costumes, music, and other aspects of production are

handled by separate crews, the students in Crump’s class did all of that work themselves.

“The actors decide the costumes, they pull together ideas on music and transitions, put together the set,” Crump says. “They did the research and dramaturgy for the piece, which I think pushed them to be really engaged with the material and the audience at a different level they wouldn’t have experienced any other way.”

While Crump’s course structure pushed her actors to interact more closely with the material, the plays’ subject matter also invited a greater degree of participation from the audience. As Crump explains, each performance was followed by a community discussion in which the actors asked the audience to share their thoughts on the plays and the themes they evoked. She hopes those conversations pushed audience members to think about their own lives and those of the other members of their communities.

“My goal was that people who came to see the show would leave thinking a bit differently, or at least having a different understanding of what reality is like for those of us who have to live these experiences every day,” Crump says. “I wanted them to leave reflecting on themselves, or their own implicit bias and accountability.”

Of course, given the seriousness of the topics evoked in “Facing Our Truth,” successful performances required mature, thoughtful audiences and a university atmosphere that invited open, productive discourse. Crump was pleased to have found both at OU.

“I’m happy to get to work on a campus that’s open to doing a series of plays like these,” Crump says. ➤

Find a variety of student performances at oakland.edu/smtd.



LENDING *Support*

By Jennifer Hogan

Quicken Loans is investing in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts at Oakland University.

A gift of \$25,000 will support a wide variety of events and programming including Hispanic Heritage Month, Pride Month, Summer Business Program, Career Services, GrizzHacks and the Veteran's Day Banquet.

In addition, Quicken Loans is the first corporate partner to fund the Center for Multicultural Initiatives CORE (Collectively Oakland Retains Everyone) program. Through CORE, Quicken Loans team members will work with first-year students to help develop career trajectory plans. Quicken Loans will also sponsor the Career Services Diversity Networking Mixer which provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about different career paths.

Trina Scott is the first chief diversity officer at Quicken Loans. Under Scott's guidance, Quicken Loans has increased efforts to recruit a diverse staff, with campus recruitment becoming central to that effort. As an alumna of the School of Business Administration and member of the Oakland University Alumni Association (OUAA) Board, Scott is committed to promoting opportunities for students of color.

"As a student at OU, my experiences helped me understand the importance of diversity programming," says Scott. "Quicken Loans is proud to partner with OU to fund new and continuing programs for today's students so they can have meaningful experiences on campus that will translate into successful career opportunities."

Omar Brown-EI, senior director of the Center for Multicultural Initiatives knows the difference that support from Quicken Loans makes in the lives of OU students.

"Our partnership with Quicken Loans allows us to broaden student success activities across campus," says Brown-EI. "They believe in the power and importance of DEI programs and creating a culture that speaks to all students." 🌟

Explore more ways to give at oakland.edu/giving.

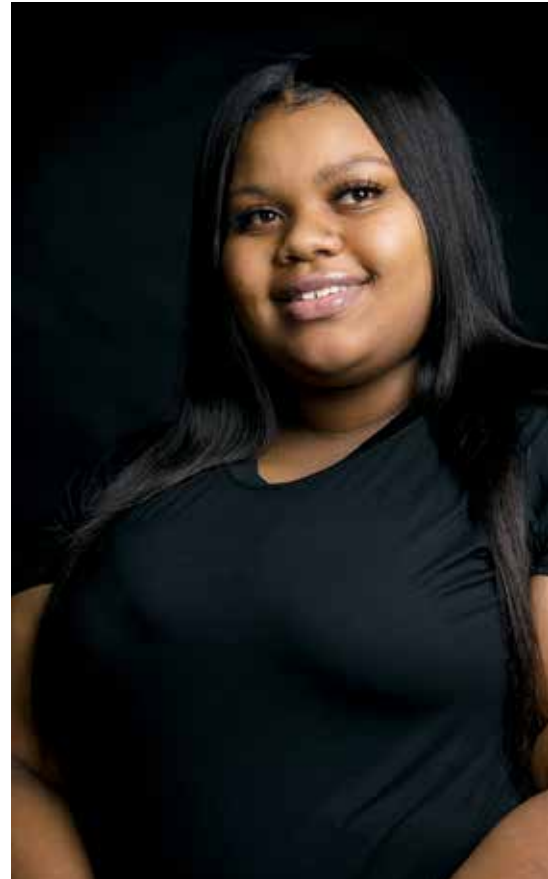
📷 John McTaggart



FREEDOM AND JUSTICE

Annual scholarship recipients reflect on their paths toward interracial understanding

Modeled after Martin Luther King's commitment to equality, the Oakland University Center for Multicultural Initiatives established the Keeper of the Dream (KOD) scholarships in 1993 to support students who personified King's mission. As such, this year's seven recipients are no exception, and the group emanates goodwill as they reflect on their strides toward interracial understanding.



Zakia Ali-James, a first-generation college student from Detroit, knew she was entering unknown territory when she first came to campus, but made sure to put herself out there and get involved wherever she could. As a peer mentor for the Center for Multicultural Initiatives (CMI), Ali-James connects with people from all walks of life.

"Everyday I try to make someone feel comfortable, whether that be from a smile, a conversation or by letting my personality shine through, because I want everyone to know how it feels to be part of an inclusive community," Ali-James says.

“I have a dream that one day . . . a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.”

– excerpt from **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s** “I Have a Dream speech”



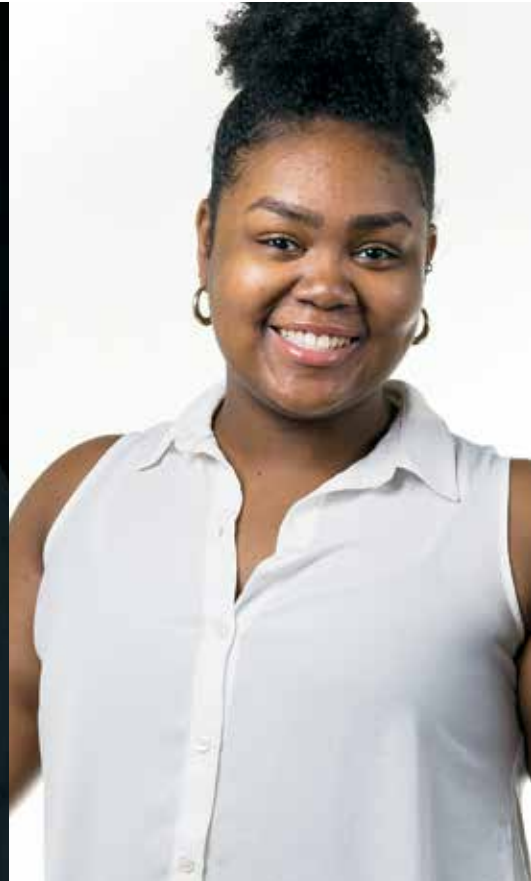
Raneen Allos is also a first-generation college student. As a Chaldean American with a strong family bond, she never had the opportunity to step out of her comfort zone. With the desire to become a physical therapist, she took a leap into unfamiliar territory – a college campus.

“Coming to college was my first opportunity to become immersed in a place where I was meeting people who had different backgrounds,” Allos says. “I have seen the beauty in diversity while also recognizing the strides we must take to continue standing up for those who are marginalized and discriminated against.”



Isaias Cruz comes from a family with a strong Hispanic background, and strives to stay true to his roots while in college. He is fluent in oral and written Spanish and uses those skills to benefit others, volunteering with Los Pentecostales De Waterford Iglesia Apostólica, as well as Personal Translations working as a scribe and translator for both institutions.

“It is crucial for us to work together, regardless of whatever label we can use to separate ourselves,” Cruz says. “A society that works together achieves more and is more efficient.”



For **Maya Ford**, it hasn’t always been smooth sailing at Oakland, but her unique and sometimes difficult journey here is something she wouldn’t trade for the world. Arriving on campus as a shy student, she is now a strong individual with big dreams.

“When I started out as a freshman, I was quiet and soft spoken,” Ford says. “I developed into a leader on campus and am committed to enhancing the lives of all women. When you have a voice and it’s heard, you have unlimited potential.”



Donovan Hernandez, who grew up with a handful of challenges as an undocumented minority, knew nothing was going to stop him from pursuing his dreams. He knows that others are going through the same struggles and he is working to give them confidence to succeed.

“Using STEM and engineering to show how anyone – regardless of age, religion or sexual orientation – can succeed makes me feel proud of what I do,” Hernandez says.

Jennifer Medrano Delacruz was never promised a college education. Getting one was an expectation of her adoptive family, but she would become the first person from her biological family to attend a university. With both of her families in her corner, she knew she would do great things.

“Both families provided a support system that inspired and helped me to believe failure was not an option,” Medrano Delacruz says.

Mikal O’Neal is determined to break down cultural barriers on campus. In order to do that, she believes that everyone should accept and respect others who are not the same as themselves. A person can persevere in any situation, but O’Neal understands that having a good foundation of support is the best way to promote change.

“No matter what circumstances are at home, there is always a way for people to overcome the negative environment in which they live and break their generational curses,” O’Neal says. “There is power in numbers, though, and power in having people in your corner and supporting you. It’s better to have a community behind you to further push diversity.”

“Each year we recognize students who exude passion, courage and a willingness to push beyond their current boundaries,” says Omar Brown-El, senior director of the Center for Multicultural Initiatives. “This year’s recipients are the embodiment of leadership and clearly deserving of the Keeper of the Dream award.”

Discover more about KOD and the Center for Multicultural Initiatives at oakland.edu/cmi.

DIVERSITY *Drives Student Passion*

By Lily Stotz

Dana Cogshell is following her passion.

A first generation college student from Detroit, Cogshell transferred to Oakland University with an associate's degree from Oakland Community College, magna cum laude. Now a junior at OU, she is making strides toward a degree in pre-human resource development with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

"I attended an event for my sign language class last year," says Cogshell. "At the event, we talked about language deprivation and the effects of it, and how we need to advocate for language equality so deaf and hard of hearing kids can have equal access to learning both English and American Sign Language."

Cogshell was amazed by all the people who came together to support this community on an issue that, until that day, she had never heard about. Her goals evolved, and Cogshell decided to be a person who advocates for underrepresented communities.

Now, striving toward a career as a diversity and inclusion officer, Cogshell hopes to create necessary programs and initiatives that support minority individuals. She believes diversity, equity and inclusion, particularly in the workplace, is vital.

"A company is only as strong as its employees," Cogshell says. "Having a diverse workforce allows you to better connect and service all patrons of your business, considering everyone isn't servicing just one type of customer."

Cogshell believes people are stronger as a unit than as individuals. She will use these principles, with the help of the School of Education and Human Services, to secure a career while making a difference in the world. ➤

Discover the difference you can make at oakland.edu/sehs



© Sarah Griffith ✍️ Lily Stotz

GLOBAL *Ambassadors*

By Kelli M. Titus

Shantel Glover and Ghazi Ghazi are devoted to global awareness. As study abroad advisers for Oakland University's Office of Global Engagement, these undergraduate students are ambassadors of cultural understanding.

Glover started at OU as a pre-PT major, but changed her degree plans after studying abroad in Seville, Spain. Now, as she finishes her double major in Spanish language and literature and Latin American studies, Glover is looking forward to serving in the Peace Corps teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in Benin, West Africa.

"Without OU's study abroad opportunities, applying to serve in the Peace Corps would have been difficult," Glover says. "The study abroad student advising also enhanced my resume, which included training students to study abroad and learn about new cultures."

Glover found her degree path because of her study abroad experience. Conversely, Ghazi chose study abroad — and OU — because of the major he wanted to pursue.

"The international relations program had everything I was looking for," Ghazi says. "It emphasizes language and regional studies, with an interdisciplinary approach, so we are taking classes in politics, history, economics and international studies."

Born in Baghdad, Iraq, Ghazi immigrated to America with a keen interest in international history, politics and globalization. He has studied in both Jerusalem and Morocco, with plans to continue his education with a master's in Middle Eastern studies in pursuit of work in the United States foreign service.

"From the various research opportunities that I have had here, to the classes and involvement that I've taken, I think I'm on a great path toward my goal," says Ghazi. "One aspect of this career is having previous experience in the region you are looking to apply for and being that I'm looking to work within the Middle East, OU has provided me with opportunities to be ready for that."

Ghazi and Glover, along with nearly 200 other students who study abroad yearly, arrive at Oakland on different paths, but find a shared community in those passionate about cultural immersion. ➤

Discover the opportunities that await you in the Office of Global Engagement at oakland.edu/global.



Garrett MacLean



The Bonds that UNITE US

© Garrett MacLean

by Kelli M. Titus

Oakland University alumni are a tight-knit community. But none more so than the Black Alumni Chapter, who are proof that you find more than an education at a university. You find a family.

"I don't know if there is a stronger fellowship of people anywhere in the country," says Robert Thornton, CAS '77. "At its core, the OU Black Alumni Association is both a network of graduates and a fellowship of friends that have evolved into this long-term partnership of people with similar ideals and principles."

The Black Alumni Chapter was created to provide a vehicle for personal and professional networking, while assisting undergraduate students to matriculate through the university and pursue successful careers. On the board of the chapter sits 12 feverishly passionate and dedicated alumni. Their diverse spectrum of experiences, degrees, backgrounds, ages and professions make them a reputable force for creating change on campus. One such success was creating the Manuel H. Pierson Endowment and supporting the Student Retention Fund.

"Everyone [on this board] gives 100 plus percent not only financially, but with their time," says Tia Cobb, secretary, SEHS '89. "And that allows us — as a group, as a family, as mentors with one another and mentors to students — to make sure that anyone coming up behind us is successful."

"The needs of students are numerous. And the needs of black students on a majority white campus are unique," Thornton explains. "It's incumbent upon people like us to make sure the university understands what black students need and help to meet those needs in ways that support student success."

"For me, the biggest movement for us is being back on campus," says Sharman Davenport, Ph.D., chair, CAS '80. "Feeling the support of the university as we work toward strengthening the Black Alumni Chapter and expanding our participation as part of the university community."

"And holding the university accountable for making sure that transitions happen," chimes in Stephanie Lee, Ed.D., CAS '93, SEHS '17 and '19.

"Each of us came in through different paths," explains Angela Banister, treasurer, SBA '95, "but we shared our experiences with one another, and that's how a lot of us got to where we are today." ➤

Article continues at oakland.edu/oumagazine.



DEFINING ONE'S IDENTITY

The impact of OU's status as the most LGBTQ+ friendly campus in Michigan

By Joan Carleton

As a first-year student, Blake Bonkowski, CAS '14, was feeling lost as he questioned his gender identity and sexual orientation. Then, a class assignment on the OU Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) changed the entire trajectory of his life.

"At the GSC, they asked me the simple question of 'would you like to stay a while?' after I had gathered my information," explains Bonkowski. "I then came back nearly every day of my undergraduate career. Everything in my entire life now gets rooted back to that moment."

Bonkowski was quickly elected as vice president of the university student group, Gay, Straight Alliance (GSA). He learned the range of gender labels and met a fellow trans student, reinforcing his understanding of his FTM (female to male) trans identity. By his junior year, Bonkowski was GSA president and using his new name and he/him/his pronouns.

"That was the experience of many students with the GSC," Bonkowski says. "We knew that we were a part of the community in some way, so we came in and found the support we needed and ultimately, our forever friends."

Bonkowski committed himself wholeheartedly to the GSC, working closely with Grace Wojcik, GSC coordinator, to facilitate inclusivity trainings for the OU community. His passion led to community engagements and educational trainings with community colleges, local businesses and churches, which he still facilitates today.

"Blake was one of the most committed GSC volunteers when I first arrived at OU," Wojcik recalls. "It has been a privilege to watch him grow as a speaker, educator and advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, it has been the privilege of my life to work alongside him as a colleague and fellow higher-education professional."

Now, as an academic adviser for the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), Bonkowski's passion is helping transgender and nonbinary students. His master's degree in college counseling gives him the necessary skills to develop relationships and support students beyond their academic courses. Beyond the students, he has a deep appreciation for the OU sense of community — nearly every employer he worked for as a student is still at OU.

"OU has quickly moved from 2.5 to 4.5 stars on the Campus Pride Index," Bonkowski states. "We are the number one most LGBTQ+ friendly campus in Michigan, and are leaders in having the policies, procedures and space to provide support to students."

"The campus community genuinely cares about continual progress. That being said, there's always work to be done."

Community members can support OU's LGBTQ+ students through the Cody Petzold Rainbow Endowed Scholarship, created in the memory of Bonkowski's friend and fellow former OU student, at oakland.edu/giving. ➤

Discover more about the Gender and Sexuality Center at oakland.edu/gsc.

OU *from* HOME

One act can affect many. A turn of phrase that took shape in the recent coronavirus pandemic, not only in the spread of the virus, but also in the spread of hope.



Emily Spunaugle



Thomas Ferrari



Tian Tian

Taking hold of this idea, Oakland University Communications and Marketing launched the OU From Home social media campaign, connecting the OU community with campus experts. The campaign encouraged faculty and staff to share acts of hope within their expertise in the form of a “selfie” video that was then posted on the university’s Facebook, Instagram and Twitter feeds. The videos live on OU’s YouTube channel or can be found with the hashtag #OUFromHome.

“Our engagement on each social platform has been great,” says Nykiera Hill, communications and marketing social media coordinator. “We were able to see positive feedback from professors, alumni and students. I’m happy that we were able to collaborate and complete this project that brings the OU community together.”

Faculty videos have included:

- Emily Spunaugle, Ph.D., assistant professor of humanities and rare books librarian at Kresge Libraries, doing an enthusiastic reading of “Owl at Home.”
- Thomas Ferrari, Ph.D., assistant professor of physiology and neuroscience from Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, teaching basic techniques of relaxation and breathing through Qigong and Tai Chi.

- Tian Tian, DMA, associate professor of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance, performing Nocturne No. 20 in C-sharp minor by Frédéric Chopin.
- David Schwartz, Ph.D., director of the OU Counseling Center, providing tips for managing stress and improving self-care during difficult times.
- Alberto Rojo, Ph.D., professor of physics in the College of Arts and Sciences, teaching scientific concepts through an easily-emulated at-home experiment that people of all ages will enjoy.

“It is important to go through this pandemic in a positive (rather than negative) way,” says Terry Dibble, special lecturer and clinical instructor in the School of Health Sciences who submitted a video discussing tips for dealing with unexpected changes and the power of laughter. “Doing these activities can really help someone that might be having a hard time right now. This campaign is a good way to spread the word to the OU community.” ➤

Read about more acts of hope and inspiration at oakland.edu/covid19response.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR ALUMNI, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO SUPPORTED COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY.

In this challenging time you stood with us, supporting our students, our community and the health care professionals on our campus.

THANK YOU for making us OAKLAND STRONG.



HEALING *Through* INCLUSIVITY

By Andrew Dietderich 📷 Robert Hall

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine (OUWB) is leading the way in implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives that benefit students and educators alike — in both classroom and health care settings.

OUWB renewed its commitment to inclusivity in the classroom when recent survey data and focus group discussions identified potential areas of improvement that are critical to learning.

“Students perform better when they have a sense of belonging in the academic environment,” says Deirdre Pitts, Ph.D., SCP-IPMA, interim associate dean for academic, faculty affairs and diversity and inclusion, and assistant professor in the Department of Foundational Medical Studies at OUWB. “OUWB is

implementing best practices and programs to ensure that our educators can create a more inclusive environment for all scholars.”

One step that OUWB is taking to improve inclusivity is the establishment of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council (DEIC). The mission of the council is guided by OU’s overall diversity mission, but further serves to unite all OUWB-specific initiatives under one umbrella to serve the school as a whole. A cross-representation of OUWB faculty, staff and students work together to evaluate DEI needs and then make recommendations for improvement.

One recommendation was to establish a set of guidelines for inclusivity in the classroom setting. “Ground Rules for the

Learning Environment” will be posted in every OUWB classroom. In addition, a cohort of faculty and staff are being trained to facilitate a program that provides educators with tools to identify and address bias and microaggressions both in the classroom and in a health care setting. Participants will evaluate real-life situations and work together to formulate a response.

Looking ahead, Dr. Pitts says to expect more programming and initiatives from OUWB’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council. “The impact of these changes will reverberate beyond the walls of OUWB and positively influence the health care setting of all the communities that our students will serve,” she says. 🌟

Article continues at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

IN THE GOLD SEAT *with Mason Turrell*

MAJOR: Graphic Design

ESTIMATED GRADUATION YEAR: 2020-21

FAVORITE STUDY SPOT:

In the back office of Veteran Support Services (VSS) or outside during the early fall season

GO-TO PARKING LOT: The small parking lot between Wilson and Graham Health Center

BEST BUILDING TO HAVE CLASSES IN: Wilson

FAVORITE MOMENT: Vet week 2019.

I won a scholarship for the second time at OU.

FAVORITE PROFESSORS:

Kim Byrd and Maria Smith-Bohannon

BEST CLASS: Alcohol, Drugs, and Society AND Foundations of Graphic Design

SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOURSELF:

Not only am I an Army veteran, but I'm the first person to graduate college in my father's family, and when I'm done with my graphic design degree, I'll have two undergrads from OU – criminal justice in 2018 and graphic design.



© Sarah Griffith

The Life of a Sicilian
13, 1927 - July 8, 2011



As written by Gi

FOUND IN TRANSLATION



Anthony Alú reconnects with his grandfather through translating his Italian memoir

By Michael Downes  Robert Hall

Anthony Alú and his Italian mentor Caterina Piéri.

Tre... Due... Uno ... VIA!

Anthony Alú and his cousins rush throughout their grandparents backyard. Wearing their Sunday best, equipped with a hand shovel; the hunt for eggs was on.

Easter egg hunts are not a tradition in Italy, but Anthony's grandfather, Gioacchino "Jack" Alú, who was born in Canicattì, Sicily, wanted to make his grandchildren happy. The American tradition was lost in translation, though. Instead of hiding them throughout the house, Jack buried them in his backyard.

"We were dressed to the nines, right after church, looking for little piles of dirt," Anthony explains. "Eventually, we found these giant balls of tin foil with a colored, hard-boiled egg inside."

This memory is engrained in Anthony's mind. He cannot tell you how many eggs he found, or who won, but he vividly remembers the smile that seemed cemented on his Nonno Jack's face.

Memories like this, though, are scarce for Anthony.

"With him passing away when I was young, along with the language barrier," says Anthony, "it wasn't easy for us to make memories together."

Because Jack only spoke Italian and Anthony only knew certain words or short phrases, the two were not able to hold



conversations. Anthony never got to listen to his grandfather's stories or learn about his past. And time to create more memories was coming to a close.

"He had been diagnosed with cancer and didn't know how long he was going to live," Anthony recalls.

To ensure his legacy and allow his grandchildren to have a lasting relationship with him, Jack turned to a typewriter to document his life.

Jack passed in 2011. But not before completing a 70-page memoir.

DECODING HISTORY

In 2013, Anthony, while in high school, stumbled upon his grandfather's story and was immediately enthralled. But, once again, the language barrier was an issue. Nonno Jack, who had a fifth-grade education, was not the most grammatically sound writer. The story was written in broken Italian, all caps and without any punctuation; it was, in a sense, a 70-page run on sentence.

Anthony could not read Italian. His Italian-rooted family, however, jumped in to help. "They tried to translate it for me so I could write the story," Anthony says. "We sat on the couch and tried it. But could barely get through a paragraph before my family started sobbing."

The memoir struck a chord with the family. It was the first time hearing the stories since Jack had read the memoir before his passing. Hearing the incredible stories of his life again, brought back great memories.

"Jack lived an incredible life," says Anthony's mother, Teresa. "He was an amazing person and touched everybody's lives."

Anthony realized that he needed to learn more about the language in order to interpret the memoir and share Nonno Jack's life. He enrolled at Oakland University, majoring in mechanical engineering. Choosing to minor in Italian languages, Anthony hoped to find a way to understand the memoir in order to reconnect with his grandfather.

During his second semester at OU, Anthony took a class taught by Special Lecturer Caterina Pieri, an Italian special lecturer for the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Anthony shared the memoir with Pieri, and the two established a process for translating: Pieri would read a chunk of the memoir aloud, the two would discuss what they believed Jack was writing and they would reconstruct the sentence in English.

"It was different from what I was used to learning and hearing growing up," Anthony says. "Nonno Jack created his own language, he would make spelling and grammatical errors, but they weren't consistent, making it difficult. We had to get out of the mindset of true Italian and start thinking like him."



While reading the text word-for-word proved to be difficult and hard to understand, speaking the words was a quicker technique. “Italian is a phonetic language,” Pieri describes. “The way that Italians write is very consistent with what they pronounce. So, there were words that weren’t spelled correctly, but when you said them, they made sense.”

Anthony and Pieri were able to find some repetitions in Jack’s writing. One phrase was seen throughout the memoir: “e cosi,” which translates to “and so.” The pair eventually understood this to be the beginning of a new thought.

“Sapendo che mia mamma aveva paura delle armi e cosi”

English translation: Knowing that my mother was afraid of guns and so ...

JACK’S JOURNAL

Nonno Jack got right to the point with his stories.

On page 2 of the memoir, Jack detailed the brutal murder of his brother while they still lived in Sicily. Jack’s brother, Antonino, was helping a friend pen love letters to a woman out of town. As time went on and more letters were written, Antonino fell in love with the woman as well, and she with him. Antonino’s friend did not take kindly to this and plotted his murder. Jack’s brother was led into the woods, where he was shot and killed.

On pages 11-12, Jack described his time working on a local farm in Sicily during World War II, when he found himself stuck in the crossfire of a battle. Jack ran into the nearest house, where he hid with multiple families, to get shelter from the battle.

Boom. A mortar hit the building.

Jack’s body was flung into the air and crashed into the ceiling, knocking him unconscious. When he came to, Jack was wounded, his jaw and leg shredded by shrapnel. Realizing he was the lone survivor in the building, Jack crawled home. His body was so battered that his sister did not recognize him when he got back.

On page 17, Jack recounted that, when he was 18 years old, a farming job brought him to an unfamiliar town for one night. Here, he crossed paths with a woman he described as “angelic.” He talked with this beautiful woman, and she gave him a photo of herself. Jack would continue to return to the town to see the woman, who would later become his wife, Anthony’s grandmother, Rosa. Jack carried that photo with him until he passed and the photo remains with the family today.

“He was definitely a fun-loving, family guy,” says Anthony, “I knew that when I was a kid, but you can really see that through his writing. I feel a lot closer to him. Through the translation, I feel like he was talking directly to me.”

BITAVANO ATTORNO F
PIU PERSONALE ALLA CASS
PURE SUA MAMMA E ANCHE ALC
E ANTATA IN VACANSA IN ITAL
A NIPOTE RITA LA FIGLIA DI MI
MIA FAMIGLIA SICCOME CI E PI
CUGINO DI MIA MOGLIA FIGLI
TOLA DI TUTTO ANCHE AI F
RIMANERE IN AMER
VORARE AL BEKERY
RO CONTENTO DI FARLO
RIMONIO E O PENSATO DI
NSA IL GIORNO DELNOSTRO AN
OMARI SONO STATI ARNONE E MOGLI
A OLIO RIPRODOTTO DA QUANTO ERO
MONIO DI MIA NIPOTE RITA E COSI CE
MIA SORELLE SONO RITORNATE IN SICILI
E RIMASTA IN AMERICA E ANNO DATO L
NON FARLA RITORNARE PIU A CANICATTI
LA MIA SODDISFAZIONE ERA CHE MIA NIP
UESTO E SUCCESSO TUTTO NEL I 979 POI
TERE IL BAKERY PERCHE I MIEI FIGLI NO
OME DA NOI CERA UNA DONNA CHE LAVORAV
TA MILA DOLLARI E IL PRIMO SETTEMBRE
I IO LAVORAVO SEMPRE ALLA GM MIA MOG
ORIA POI IL NATALE SIAMO ANTATI I
A E ABIAMO PENSATO DI INVESTIRE I
LARE UN NUOVO BAKERY E LABIAMO TROVA



RECONSTRUCTING ROOTS

After learning so much about his grandfather and the Alú family heritage, Anthony was compelled to visit Nonno Jack's homeland. Luckily, a window of opportunity opened, as Oakland University offered a study abroad course in Italy. Anthony flew to Trieste, in northern Italy, and immersed himself in the history while practicing his Italian with locals. As the rest of the study abroad group flew back to the states, though, Anthony stayed to further explore Italy and connect with his relatives.

"I went to a little town called Sant'Elia, in the mountains by Monte Cassino," Anthony says. "My aunts and cousins on my mom's side still live on a farm there."

In a similar situation with his grandfather, Anthony's family did not speak English. Thankfully, this time around, he was prepared.

"By the end of the trip I was holding conversations with them," explains Anthony. "I was gone for almost two months, immersed in the Italian language and culture. I was able to speak with my aunts and cousins, who I had met for the first time, which was amazing."

After Sant'Elia, Anthony travelled south to Sicily, where his parents and brother flew in to join him. Even though it was his first time stepping foot on the island, he was overcome with a



feeling of home. Through his grandfather's stories, he had a sense of familiarity with the land. And, despite Sicily's demographic changing over the years, the Alú's were able to visit areas that were mentioned in the memoir, including Nonno Jack's home.

"We went to the house he lived in for a majority of his life," Anthony says. "That was the house that my dad lived in until he was four or five. It was interesting because they had an iron sign made with my great grandfather's initials, which was the same as my grandfather's initials on it, still hanging on the house."

Anthony's father was finally able to show off the house he would kick a soccer ball off of; the hill that the ball would roll down; and the window it would eventually crash into and shatter. An infamous story that Anthony had heard millions of times.

Gazing upon his grandfather's old stomping grounds, embracing the Sicilian culture and speaking Italian with lost relatives: these and an abundance of other moments have joined the Easter egg hunt; memories that, thanks to Nonno Jack, have strengthened Anthony's family bond. 🍷

Explore other multicultural experiences in the Department of Modern Languages and Literature at oakland.edu/languages. See more at oakland.edu/oumagazine.



Supportive Friends

By Catherine Ticer  Robert Hall


The support of friends makes an important difference. The warmth of such friendship has embraced Oakland University's School of Music, Theatre and Dance (SMTD). An anonymous donor with a passion for performing arts has generously pledged to match gifts to the school of \$250 or more — up to a total of \$100,000.

The initiative that began September 1, 2019, concludes on June 30, 2020. Matching funds for all new gifts to the school received by February 29 are designated by the donor for OU's Department of Music. Matching funds for gifts received after that date support initiatives throughout the entire school.

Encompassing a world-class faculty, SMTD provides pre-professional, professional, liberal arts and general education in the performing arts through artistically grounded academic programs and diverse performance opportunities. SMTD produces more than 150 performances and events each season.

"A generous philanthropist has placed their confidence in our ability to provide outstanding educational experiences for our students," says Amy Hardison Tully, D.M.A., director, Oakland University School of Music, Theatre and Dance and associate dean, College of Arts and Sciences.

"We are invigorated by our donor's respect for our vision and extremely grateful for the opportunity to further our commitment to helping our students cultivate their passions and realize their dreams."

"We want to express our heartfelt thanks for such an empowering gift that will light the journey of success for our deserving students," Tully says. 

Learn more about this unique opportunity to double your gift to SMTD at oakland.edu/smtld/give.

Mackenna Greene is an SMTD student majoring in music and music education.



MID-LIFE *career shift*

By Patrick Dunn  Adam Sparkes

When Randy Dudley, CAS '16, walked into his first class at Oakland University at age 43, he says he felt like he had “broken some roadblocks.”

Dudley had a difficult childhood, growing up with parents who were both heroin addicts. He enlisted in the Army to use the G.I. Bill benefits to go to college, but after his service term ended, he got married and started working at Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS). While at BCBS, he enrolled at Oakland Community College (OCC) and, thirteen years later, got a divorce. That was when Dudley decided to fully pursue his educational dreams instead of “sitting on my hands.”

“Life kept happening, and I didn’t want it to stop me from my goal,” Dudley says.

While at OCC, Dudley met Maria Beam, LMSW, Ph.D., director of OU’s social work program. Beam introduced him to the social work staff at Oakland University and he transferred there in 2010 to pursue his bachelor’s degree in social work.

“Their willingness to open up and accept me gave me an opportunity to just be myself,” Dudley says. “The transition was really easy at OU.”

Dudley graduated from OU in 2016 and delivered the opening remarks at his class’ pinning ceremony. Although he got a late start in his education and new career, he says his age and experience give him a unique advantage in building trust and relating to his clients.

“It takes a special person to work with people who have given up in life,” Dudley says. “And I feel like, as an older man who had a lot of odds seemingly against him, I realized that it was just a state of mind and that realization allowed me to overcome those odds.” ➤

Find your next step at oakland.edu/macomb.



DESK DRAWER FUND

OU Credit Union embodies a culture of philanthropy, and we will continue to lead the way in encouraging investment in our community. To further our commitment, we've established the Desk Drawer Fund, a foundation to support the communities we serve.

The Desk Drawer Fund supports various initiatives within five philanthropic pillars:

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CULTURE

STABLE
HOUSING

EMPOWERING
YOUTH

FINANCIAL
EDUCATION

FOSTERING
ENTREPRENEURIALISM

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deskdrawerfund.org



DESK DRAWER FUND

A Foundation Supporting the
OU Credit Union Community

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Securing the FUTURE

By Jennifer Hogan © Robert Hall

Debbie Pruent and her husband, Jeff VanHoorne, both Oakland University alumni, know firsthand the value of a graduate education and the importance of cybersecurity in the 21st century.

Pruent and VanHoorne are supporting graduate students through three unique initiatives: the Graduate School Finish Line Scholarship, Jeffrey C. VanHoorne Cybersecurity Student Loan Program and Jeffrey C. VanHoorne Cybersecurity Professional Allowance.

Pruent and VanHoorne first met when carpooling to OU while earning their master's degrees and working at General Motors. "We were both fortunate to receive tuition assistance through General Motors," says Pruent. "We established the Finish Line Scholarship to provide today's students with the support needed to finish their graduate degrees."

VanHoorne played a major role in establishing cybersecurity protocols at General Motors in the early days of the internet.

This background, coupled with their desire to strengthen U.S. cybersecurity capability, inspired the couple to create the Jeffrey C. VanHoorne Cybersecurity Student Loan Program, supporting students working toward OU's cybersecurity master's degree. Recipients of the loan program are also eligible for the Jeffrey C. VanHoorne Cybersecurity Professional Allowance, which provides funding for professional growth activities including traveling to and attending job fairs, government background checks, internships, certifications and other expenses. The goal of both programs are to funnel high-level cybersecurity talent to top U.S. government agencies.

"The vision of Debbie and Jeff will make an incredible difference in the lives of graduate students and has the power to impact national security at the highest levels," says Michael Westfall, vice president of university advancement. "Their gift makes it possible to help the next generation of leaders take on the global challenges of the future." ➤

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WOMEN



IN STEM



The importance of expanding the field of STEM researchers

By Kelli M. Titus  Robert Hall

“Choosing this field was good for me,” says Alyssa Lalko, Oakland University mechanical engineering major. “It means I can make an impact in multiple ways. All engineering students are empowered, in one sense, to impact the world with their skills. But as a woman in STEM, I can also be a role model to other females.”

Lalko is one of nearly 1,900 female students who has a STEM-related major at OU. And it’s no wonder. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, occupations in the science, technology, engineering and mathematic fields are projected to increase 8.8 percent by 2028 — compared to 5 percent for non-stem-related. But while the occupational need is high, the U.S. female-to-male ratio in the STEM workforce is off balance. Although 46.7 percent of those employed in sciences are women, there are only 25.6 percent that occupy employment in computer and mathematics and 15.6 percent in architecture and engineering occupations.

Why does this matter? For STEM fields that are rooted in research, the need is evident: diverse theories derive from diverse perspectives.

“Science and technology are essential to the foundation of innovation,” says Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D. “For a university’s work to elevate future generations, it needs to be informed by a variety of experiences. Being a female scientist, researcher or professor doesn’t change the findings, but instead enhances them by broadening interpretations in important ways.”

The following women are pioneers in their fields, carving a unique space in their designated areas of research. Their experiences span across generations. And while these women hold varying degrees and academic accolades, each one offers a distinct contribution to their craft that will help push their fields forward in both scholarly exploration and gender equality.

SCIENCE

Jumping headfirst into her career, **Tara Diesbourg, Ph.D.**, is the picture of ambition. She teaches courses full-time, advises a national student organization's OU chapter, networks with industry partners for research opportunities and helps develop a new biomechanics lab in the School of Health Sciences — all within her first year at Oakland.


"I don't do anything halfway," Dr. Diesbourg attests. "I'm learning and growing with my students, so I can keep expanding my knowledge in the field."

Dr. Diesbourg began her role as an assistant professor in environmental health and safety in 2019. Her education was predominately in kinesiology, where she dipped her toe in ergonomics a decade ago and made the leap to occupational safety when she came to OU. There was a need for ergonomic programs for safety professionals, and Diesbourg found a place where she could merge her extensive training in muscle movements and workplace efficiency.

"My focus was on movement science, particularly in biomechanics which naturally led to the study of ergonomics," says Dr. Diesbourg. "At OU, I identified a relationship between two health sciences programs (environmental health and safety and movement science) that I could bridge with my background."

A testament to the fusion of her educational endeavors, Dr. Diesbourg's research looks at how the body of special populations function in the workplace. She is keenly interested in how normal changes in a person's lifespan affect their ability to stay healthy in the tasks they undertake, and will have the resources to further pursue these studies once the school's Biomechanics Ergonomics and Athletics Research (BEAR) lab is completed over the next year.

Although Dr. Diesbourg did not anticipate finding herself in this field at the start of her academic career, she knows she is exactly where she needs to be. "If what you think you want in your career doesn't feel right, then change it," she shares. "As long as you are willing to have an open mind, there is no limit to what you can do."



TECHNOLOGY

Avanti Tatiraju, SBA '18, has come a long way to follow her dreams. Born and educated with a Master of Business Administration in India, Tatiraju worked as an analyst at a bank, where she was the sole woman in her division. While she enjoyed the work, Tatiraju felt undervalued for the high-pressure atmosphere. She and her husband eventually decided to leave India and seek more opportunities in the U.S., finding her way to Oakland in search of a new career path.

“As a child, I never knew whether to go with data or programming, because I loved both,” recalls Tatiraju. Following these interests, she pursued a master’s in information technology management. Tatiraju felt at home in the program, working closely with faculty and securing graduate assistantships for two semesters. Her first was text analytics for Ford, using a new tool to scroll through complaints and look for common words. The tool allowed customers to discuss automotive safety and her goal was to sort through the common words. But there was a missing component: a human connection. Tatiraju found that common words, out of context, lacked an effective means for a solution. She was drawn to finding this human connection in her second assistantship, where she began work on a unique research project with Henry Ford Health Systems.

“Working in a hospital was so much more real,” Tatiraju explains. “The human component is always necessary. You need face-to-face interaction in order to gather accurate data.”

Tatiraju found her calling. She immersed herself in the data analysis of health care, researching the common threads of people diagnosed with sepsis — a common, but potentially deadly condition caused by an infection. The research project served more as an internship, and upon graduating from Oakland, Tatiraju seamlessly transitioned straight into a career with Henry Ford Health Systems as an access technology analyst.

“It feels amazing that I can contribute something back to society and I’m proud to make a difference in people’s lives,” says Tatiraju. “Health care feels like home to me.”



ENGINEERING

With a family of engineers and teachers, **Alyssa Lalko, SECS '20**, grew up with a love and appreciation for all fields of study, from math to music. But it was her fascination with the physics of movement that solidified her decision to major in mechanical engineering. Lalko's pursuit toward this degree led her to Oakland's Engineering and Computer Science Day, and found the welcoming and close-knit community between students and faculty just what she was looking for.

"Having this connection with the faculty has really helped me be more engaged with my studies, in my research and in my focus for my future," says Lalko.

During her sophomore year, on track with her bachelor's in mechanical engineering and specialization in energy, Lalko was accepted into the Applied Research Experience for Electrical and Computer Engineers (ApREECE) program — a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program hosted at OU for engineering students — and once in the program, she realized that "something just clicked." Up until this point, Lalko was unsure of her exact career path, but, thanks to the REU program, she now knows she wants to narrow her focus to a research-related career.

Currently researching drones, Lalko is uncovering how to fly them longer. "Drones are operated with batteries and they have very low energy density, meaning they're very heavy for the amount of energy they can actually supply," she describes. "Because weight is such an important factor in drones, battery-operated drones can only last for a maximum of 30 minutes. We're coming up with the simplest approach to having drones fly longer by adding a gasoline system to the drone."

Between family support, research opportunities and faculty collaboration, Lalko is confident moving forward with her next steps toward a Ph.D. program. But, she recognizes the path looks different for everyone, and hopes to encourage aspiring female engineers to follow and explore their interests.

"Sometimes, you have to make your own path," she says. "Seek out opportunities to try new things and then don't be afraid to take advantage of those opportunities. That has definitely helped me define my future."



MATHEMATICS

Can girls do math? Ask **Anna Maria Spagnuolo, Ph.D., CAS '91 and '93**, and, with a warm smile, she will casually fold her hands atop her large oak desk and share stories about her life-altering work in biomathematics.

“To develop mathematics in order to apply it into the medical community is amazing,” Dr. Spagnuolo says. “The ability of women to do these things and be brave has changed perceptions. That’s the value of some of the math.”

As professor and chair of Oakland’s Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Dr. Spagnuolo holds an impressive academic career earning her doctorate at Purdue and teaching and performing research at Texas A&M. Her work is, in a word, unprecedented. As a doctoral student, she was instrumental in assisting federal agencies and world-renowned research organizations with real-world issues, including assessing the containment of radioactive elements in Nevada’s Yucca Mountains. If there was a problem a career mathematician or educator could not solve, they would call in Spagnuolo. But her brilliance in the classroom also put a target on her back, as one of the few female students majoring in math.

“There was definitely old-school thinking,” Dr. Spagnuolo recalls. “I tried to ignore it and it worked for me, but it definitely wasn’t easy. There is a lot I had to overcome. It wasn’t an easy ride.”

Personifying female empowerment, Dr. Spagnuolo utilizes her competitive nature and vast education to study life-threatening illnesses through mathematical models. She is one of only a handful of researchers in the world devoted to exploring Chagas – a parasitic disease found in Central and South America. Collaborating with these other experts, Spagnuolo uses mathematical simulations to track the disease process and test scenarios to determine the best way to eradicate it. As much as she loves this work, though, her heart lies with mentoring her students at Oakland.

“My heart is in academia and Michigan, and I love the sense of community here,” Dr. Spagnuolo says. “Everyone is so open to helping one another, and because of that the students here do very well afterward.”

“I tell all my students, especially the women, that they should always follow their dreams,” she continues. “There shouldn’t be anything stopping them from succeeding.” 🌙

See how OU can help you succeed at oakland.edu.



BASEBALL *Outreach*

By Michael Downes

On Tuesdays in autumn, the Oakland University baseball team's practices last an hour longer than usual. For the past five years, the team has worked alongside the Joanne and Ted Lindsay Foundation Autism Outreach Services (OUCARES), helping students on the autism spectrum with baseball camps.

"We work with children, teens and young adults to develop self-confidence, sportsmanship and teamwork to improve behavior and social life through baseball drills," says Dan Rutan, a left-handed pitcher for OU and director of the OUCARES baseball program.

Rutan is in charge of roughly 15 students as they go through hitting, fielding and pitching drills before scrimmaging one another. He has seen a vast improvement in the OUCARES participants as the weeks go on.

"It gets them out of their shell," explains Rutan. "At the beginning, the kids are very shy and hesitant; some don't

even want to leave the car or interact with us. By the last few camps, they're running toward the field, ready to grab a glove and a ball."

The camps reach farther than the attendees and have a meaningful impact on the players, too.

"A lot goes on in college; every day is a grind," Rutan says. "For that hour, we're able to put everything aside and just be with the kids and see them have a great time."

"It shows that we can have an impact in their life," he continues, "and there's no greater joy in life than positively impacting someone else's life." 🐾

Explore more ways OU Athletics supports the community at oakland.edu/athletics.



Calculating COMMUNITY

By Catherine Ticer

Middle school students in Pontiac will soon be surrounded by a community of support as Oakland University launches Math Corps, an academic enrichment and mentoring program funded, in part, through the generosity of donors.

The six-week program will commence on OU's campus beginning summer of 2020, and provide services to 60 children. Instruction will cover a variety of formats including fundamentals of mathematics and advanced topics, but the true focus will be building a sense of community based on the values of kindness and integrity.

Since 1992, Math Corps has successfully enhanced the lives of students in Detroit. OU is now poised to serve children in Pontiac.

The mission of Math Corps is to help as many children as possible realize their own greatness — providing them with the care, love and support that all kids need in the moment, and empowering them with the kinds of educational lifetime opportunities that lead to bright futures.

W. David Tull, chair of Oakland University's Board of Trustees, and wife, Renee, made a generous gift to help launch Math Corps at OU.

"We believe in the power of Math Corps to make a difference in the lives of children," says David Tull. "We are proud to support Oakland University in bringing this program to Pontiac students."

You, too, can support and grow Math Corps at Oakland University by contacting Angela Robinson at angelarobinson@oakland.edu, (248) 370-3183, or visiting oakland.edu/giving.

**Special thanks to donors who have supported
OU's Math Corps program (as of 02/26/2020):**

Michael and Adele Acheson | Michael and Zina Kramer
W. David and Renee Tull | PNC Bank



HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS

Associate professor challenges students' preconceived notions of homelessness

By Patrick Dunn

 Garrett MacLean

Since launching a program that offers free health care for the homeless 14 years ago, Judith Fouladbakhsh, Ph.D., says her students have had to radically rethink their perceptions of what a homeless person looks like and has experienced.

“We encountered lawyers that are homeless, nurses that are homeless,” says Dr. Fouladbakhsh, an associate professor at Oakland University’s School of Nursing. “I think in community health people have a preconceived notion of what problems exist out there. This helps them to see that homelessness varies widely and it affects people across all economic levels.”



Dr. Fouladbakhsh started the Holistic Integrative Healthcare for the Homeless program when she was teaching at Wayne State University, and moved it with her to OU five years ago. She and her students primarily provide care to homeless guests at the Welcome Inn, a shelter program currently based in Royal Oak and established by the nonprofit South Oakland Citizens for the Homeless. However, Dr. Fouladbakhsh has worked with other shelters as well, and last year established a new partnership with Pontiac-based Grace Centers of Hope.

Dr. Fouladbakhsh and her students provide a wide variety of services through the program at Welcome Inn. They treat many conditions in an onsite nurses' clinic, while more serious conditions are referred to local hospitals or EMS. They also provide supportive, complementary healing services for stress and pain management including yoga therapy, with one-on-one consultations and classes, and energy therapies such as healing touch and reiki.

"We focus on primary prevention," Dr. Fouladbakhsh says. "Let's provide some stress relief and maintenance for people who are in very stressful situations."

OU students volunteer to participate in the program, some to do research for their capstone projects and others just because they're seeking extracurricular community service. Julian Smith fell into the former camp while completing his Bachelor of Science in Nursing at OU last winter. He describes the experience as "eye-opening."

"What struck me was how I initially had perceptions that homeless people had done certain things and made bad decisions, and then they end up on the streets," he says. "But based on my research and my interactions with people, the reality is that bad things can happen to anybody at any time."

Dr. Fouladbakhsh usually has two to four student volunteers for the program per semester, but she hopes to expand that number when the School of Nursing begins requiring clinical experiences for its students in fall 2020.

"Nurses that may never work a day in community health should get to know their patients, because they may be caring for someone that's homeless and not even realize that," Dr. Fouladbakhsh says. "They become more open-minded about understanding the individual and the individual's situation." 🌙

Discover more nursing community service opportunities at oakland.edu/nursing.



Honoring EXCELLENCE

By Erin Sudrovech  John McTaggart

The 25th Annual Alumni Awards celebrated the groundbreaking work and community commitment of graduates of Oakland University. The event recognized alumni who have distinguished themselves as strong leaders in their respective fields and through service to their alma mater.

Rochester Hills Mayor and chair of the OU Alumni Association (OUAA) Board of Directors, Bryan Barnett, SBA '98, spoke about the historical impact of alumni in the community and beyond. Also on hand was OU alumna Eva Aguirre Cooper, CAS '82, vice president of community partnerships with Univision, who emceed the event.

President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D., recognized the achievements of this year's honorees, including Gary Brancaleone, SBA '82, who received the highest honor of the evening, the Distinguished Alumni Service Award, and Jayne Houdyshell, ADA '74, who received the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award.

In addition to the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award, President Pescovitz also recognized Houdyshell as a 2019 recipient of an honorary degree and led a short investiture ceremony where she presented Houdyshell with a Doctorate of Arts Honoris Causa.



Gary Brancaleone, SBA '82



Jayne Houdyshell, ADA '74

In total, eight alumni and friends were honored in seven categories:

- Nihal W. Goonewardene, CAS '72
Alumni Community Service Award
- Anthony C. Boganey, MD, FACS, MBA, CAPT, MC USN, CAS '88
Alumni Community Service Award
- Amy Ring Cebelak, CAS '11
Outstanding Young Alumni Award
- Robert J. Ray, CFP, SBA '05
Spirit Award
- James Ewing, Ph.D., CAS '92
Odyssey Award
- Ron Kevern
Honorary Alumni Award
- Jayne Houdyshell, ADA '74
Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award
- Gary Brancaleone, SBA '82
Distinguished Alumni Service Award ➤

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A BETTER TOMORROW

Former president of Poland speaks at OU's Varner Vitality lecture

By *Laura Phillips* 📷 *John McTaggart* ✍️ *Lily Stotz*

His notoriety comes from the past, but Lech Wałęsa only looks to the future for a better world.

Wałęsa, a former electrician, has been in the global spotlight as a politician, trade-union organizer, philanthropist and human-rights activist. He was also the featured speaker at Oakland University's Varner Vitality lecture last November.

The former president of Poland and 1983 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Wałęsa was a key organizer of the 1980 Lenin Shipyard strike in Gdańsk, Poland. There, workers organized against Poland's communist regime and ultimately succeeded in establishing Solidarity (Solidarność), the Soviet bloc's first independent trade union. The movement is credited as a major step in the ultimate fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

"My role is to encourage debate; to come up with topics that need debating," Wałęsa says at the Varner Vitality presentation. "We have very deep divisions that hamper the progress of the world ... We need to construct something else, to replace the old world with the divisions. And we're not very good at doing that."

Wałęsa contends that democracy is not fully living up to the challenges of the modern world, leaving a gap between an old era of the Cold War and a new era of order. "We're in between the two," Wałęsa states. "Which I refer to as the era of the word, of debate."

"Certainly we need to keep the free market economy as an element of this new economic system," Wałęsa continues. "But in the old capitalism, there was so much rivalry. One country competed against the other, it was like a rat race."

Wałęsa has ideas on how solutions can be found. His model of debate involves a "triangle" of constituents who use technology to model social solutions. The triangle is made up of laborers on one side, business owners on the second and governments on the third. He believes that by entering the demands of the three into a modeling program, solutions can be created.

"This will be totally emotionless, without any strikes, without any fights. All coolly calculated to the best answers possible," he says. 🌙



Article continues at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

Augustine Kwasi Fosu, Ph.D., was an assistant professor, associate professor and professor of economics in the business school from 1979-2002.



OU MOMENT

Celebrating 50 formative years

The 2019-20 academic year marked the golden anniversary of the School of Business Administration at Oakland University. In its first half century, the OU School of Business Administration evolved from a small business program to a nationally recognized, internationally accredited business school. Join in the celebration of 50 formative years at the School of Business Administration's Golden Gala, Friday, October 30 at the Royal Park Hotel, and a Celebratory Brunch, Saturday, October 31, in the Oakland Center. Details and reservations at oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50. ➤



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