

**Agendum  
Oakland University  
Board of Trustees Formal Session  
February 6, 2023**

**APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE FOR WENDEL A. WHITE  
A Recommendation**

1. **Division and Department:** Academic Affairs, Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.
2. **Introduction:** In accordance with Article IX of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, honorary degrees may be awarded by the Board of Trustees in recognition of distinguished accomplishment and service within the scope of the arts and letters, sciences, professions, and public service as recognized and supported by the University. The awarding of honorary degrees reaffirms Oakland University's scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and ties the University to the community at large.

Wendel A. White is a Distinguished Professor of Art and American Studies at Stockton University located in New Jersey. The focus of his long and outstanding career as an African American artist exemplifies ethical and moral principles in keeping with all of Oakland University's core values.

Professor White holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the School of Visual Arts in New York and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Texas at Austin. Well-established as a senior figure in the field of contemporary photography, his art has long been preoccupied with issues pertaining to his African American heritage.

From the beginning of his practice as a professional artist in the early 1980s, Professor White has been committed to explore, photographically, the racialized experiences of the Black community. The subject of forty-two solo exhibitions and more than eighty-seven selected group shows since 1982, his artwork can be found in some twenty-three public collections, including those of the Museum of Fine Art in Houston, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, the Graham Foundation for the Advancement of Fine Arts and the Museum of Contemporary Photography, both in Chicago, and the Archive of Documentary Art at Duke University.

There are currently three books published about his work, with a fourth one in development at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology at Harvard University, where he served as the 2021 Robert Gardner Fellow in Photography. His most recent monograph, *Schools for the Colored*, was released this year in both trade and limited editions. *Manifest* was published in 2014 by the California Institute of Integral Studies and *Small Towns, Black Lives* in 2003 by the Noyes Museum of Art.

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In addition to his own writing, which can be found in seven journals, exhibition catalogs, and edited works, his selected bibliography includes more than one hundred and thirteen mentions and/or reproductions of his work in print. Since 1988, Professor White has spoken publicly about his work some seventy-five times through artist talks, gallery tours, or panel discussions.

Along with his distinguished professorship at Stockton University and the Peabody Museum Fellowship noted above, Professor White was awarded a prestigious fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 2003, and a dozen grants and artist residencies. His deep commitment to community work in the fields of arts and culture is reflected in his many years of professional service and stewardship on the board of directors for the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the New Jersey Black Culture and Heritage Foundation, the aforementioned Society for Photographic Education, the Kodak Educational Advisory Council, and the Atlantic City Historical Museum. He currently sits on the advisory board for the State of the Arts New Jersey and the New Jersey Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission. His expertise is also frequently sought by funding agencies and academic programs in need of external reviewers.

From September 8 - November 26, 2023, the Oakland University Art Gallery (OUAG) will feature a solo exhibition of Wendel A. White's photographic art. This exhibition, which has yet to be titled, will include representative samples from four distinct bodies of work produced by the artist since the late 1980s, each one devoted to a specific aspect of the African American experience.

3. **Previous Board Action:** The Board of Trustees periodically awards honorary degrees at its Formal Sessions.
4. **Budget Implications:** None.
5. **Educational Implications:** The awarding of honorary degrees is an established tradition in academe, by which the University reaffirms its scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and its ties to the wider community.
6. **Personnel Implications:** None.
7. **University Reviews/Approvals:** The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost has recommended approval of the recipient to receive an Honorary Degree.
8. **Recommendation:** RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees awards the honorary degree of Doctor of Arts *Honoris Causa* to Wendel A. White.

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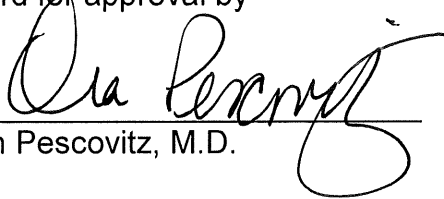
9. Attachments: None.

Submitted to the President  
on \_\_\_\_\_, 2023 by



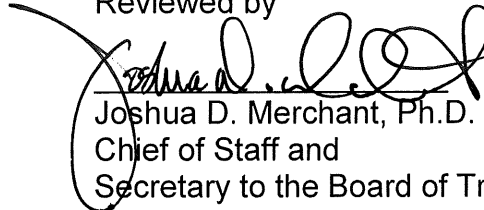
Britt Rios-Ellis, M.S., Ph.D.  
Executive Vice President for  
Academic Affairs and Provost

Recommended on 2/1, 2023  
to the Board for approval by



Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.  
President

Reviewed by



Joshua D. Merchant, Ph.D.  
Chief of Staff and  
Secretary to the Board of Trustees