

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY | *Macomb County*

# FOCUS

## Proud Pioneer

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Educator Zita Burton  
celebrates four decades in the  
classroom and community

*In this issue: School of Nursing students learn through connections  
with vulnerable populations in Macomb County*

## *Message from the Executive Director*

# CONTINUING OUR COMMITMENT TO COUNTY CONSTITUENTS



This is a tremendous time for Oakland University as we continue to strengthen our commitment to the Macomb County constituents we work with and support: degree-seeking students, college-bound teens, local communities and businesses, and the more than 20,000 alums who call Macomb County home.

Each year, more than 2,000 OU students take courses at our locations in Macomb County — the OU Anton/Frankel Center in Mount Clemens and Macomb University Center in Clinton Township. Over the past year, our team has been working to expand our undergraduate and graduate programs so our students may have the opportunity to complete their entire OU degree in Macomb County.

Increasing bachelor's degree attainment in Macomb County is essential so residents are workforce-ready to compete for the best available jobs. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that Macomb County added 5,558 new jobs to the economy so far this year. And

Macomb's unemployment rate is 3.9 percent — the lowest it's been in nearly 16 years. However, county demographics show more than 60 percent of residents over the age of 25 have taken some college courses or earned an associate's degree but haven't earned a bachelor's degree. In most cases, these are working adults with family obligations.

To better serve this population, we conducted OU student focus groups and surveys. And, as a result of this research, OU has begun offering accelerated, hybrid classes in marketing and management right here in Macomb County. These hybrid courses — a combination of classroom and online — allow students to complete their OU degree more quickly. Looking forward to 2018, OU will be offering degree programs in this accelerated, hybrid format at both the at each of our locations in Macomb County. Stay tuned for additional details and program launch dates.

In this year's issue of Oakland University Macomb County FOCUS magazine, you'll learn about the School of Nursing's impact in the county, faculty who are using meaningful techniques in the classroom, alums making a name for themselves and representing OU proudly, our award-winning advisers and other stories.

In everything we do, we show our support and commitment to Macomb County's future and the more than 20,000 OU alums who live and work here. 🐾

### **Julie Dichtel**

*OU Executive Director of Macomb County Outreach*

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# OUT *and* AROUND *in* MACOMB COUNTY

## **STRONGER IN NUMBERS: IN THE COMMUNITY AND WITH OUR ALUMS**

- 300 marching in the Macomb County Santa Parade
- 350 alums watching a summer baseball game at Jimmy John's Field Stadium
- 44 running or volunteering at Let's Move Festival of Races

Dichtel adds, "OU supports organizations like Leadership Macomb and Junior Leadership Macomb and events like the annual State of the County address, Macomb Business Awards and the Governor's Business Luncheon to also demonstrate our commitment to Macomb County."

OU is proud to be in Macomb County. Stay in touch and learn more about our 2017-18 events at [oakland.edu/macomb/events](http://oakland.edu/macomb/events).

"Creating meaningful opportunities for engagement with the approximately one-third of our student population and more than 20,000 alums who live in Macomb County is essential to our mission. In the last year, nearly 700 students, staff, faculty and alums showed their Grizzly pride by supporting and participating in local events, initiatives and projects benefitting communities in Macomb County."

— Julie Dichtel, OU Executive Director of Macomb County Outreach





# BEST *and* BRIGHTEST

## OU School of Engineering and Computer Science's Debra Wheeler recognized as top adviser

by Patti Georgevich © Adam Sparkes

Few are able to realize their passion in life as a profession. Debra Wheeler of the School of Engineering and Computer Science is one of the fortunate ones. She does what she loves — helping others — and she's been honored for it.

Wheeler has received the Oakland University 2016-17 Outstanding Professional Academic Advising Award. She was recognized at a ceremony in April.

OU students, staff, alumni and faculty nominated 25 academic advisers for consideration this year. Those considered then submit a packet of their achievements to the seven members of the recognition committee.

"We ask that those nominated support proactive advising skills, they have a strong student success rate and there's evidence to go along with it," says Ann Hamilton, bachelor of integrative studies academic counselor and a member of the recognition committee at OU.

For the third consecutive year, an adviser providing services to OU students in Macomb County received this award. Wheeler joins Laurie Shano, who won in 2014, and Lindsay Zeig, who won in 2015.

"I felt many emotions when I learned I'd been selected," says Wheeler. Expressing humility, she adds, "I work with a talented and devoted group of people — any one of us could have received the award."

Wheeler has a master's degree in counseling from OU as well as a post-master certification in career development facilitation. She was a therapist at New Horizons Counseling Center in Fair Haven and an adviser at St. Clair County Community College before joining OU as a School of Business Administration adviser in 2013. She transitioned to her current advising role in 2016.

One of Wheeler's nominators was OU alumnus, Danny Maassarani, SBA '06. When he was a student, he sought her guidance.

"I was trying to decide if I should change from being a medicine major to getting a business degree," says Maassarani. "She made the transition seamless and easy, and gave me the motivation and encouragement I needed."

Wheeler says, "It means the world to me that my students took the time to submit their thoughtful comments."

She's received additional recognition for her advising prowess. In May, Wheeler received the 2017 MIACADA Academic Advising Award (Primary Role). She'll be recognized as the 2017 Outstanding Advising Award Winner (Primary Advising category) at the annual NACADA conference in St. Louis this fall. And Wheeler will represent OU at the National Academic Advising Association awards.

"I love what I do," says Wheeler. "I guide my students so they're prepared for life's transitions and capable of making important decisions. I help them develop resiliency so they approach obstacles with 'grit,' identify and achieve goals, stay true to the course and accomplish their dreams." ➤



Academic advisers: Lindsay Zeig and Laurie Shano



# COLLEGE *and* CAREER READY

## Career camps help teens prepare for future success

Throughout her professional career, Paulette Grass has seen many new college graduates enter the workforce and be disappointed because their career choice wasn't what they'd envisioned.

"As a parent, I knew I didn't want that for my son," says Grass.

Grass encouraged her teen son, Brandon, to attend an Oakland University Career Exploration Camp. Since 2012, nearly 700 local high school teens have attended one of OU's Summer Career Camps in Macomb and Oakland counties.

Designed to motivate and inspire, the career camps are a unique pre-college experience where teen campers explore potential college majors and possible careers in health care, engineering, computer science, criminal justice, business, graphic design and more. Teen campers participate in hands-on, skill-building activities and exercises, action-packed field trips and dynamic discussions with industry professionals as well as OU faculty, staff, alums and students.

"Brandon really enjoyed the health camp because it gave him a clear idea of his college major and future career. He saw professionals in the field 'at work' and had the chance to ask questions. He's currently studying biomedical diagnostics and plans to become a dentist," says Grass. "As a parent, it

was wonderful to allow my son to learn more about the fields he was considering."

Andrew Michaels attended the career exploration camp and appreciated the career direction, insight and guidance he received from the camp counselors. "I was interested in both the health care and law fields. I loved the one-on-one attention and the camp counselors' enthusiasm. I got all the information I needed to make decisions about my future," says Michaels. "The counselors gave me an overview of how college works and what they're looking for. I also got a better understanding and importance of AP classes. I've told all my friends at Dakota High what a great experience I had."

Landon Smith always knew he wanted a career in radiology. "I enjoyed attending the health camp because it allowed me to meet other people who were interested in the same field. I'd recommend OU's career camps because of all the relationships I formed and because the information provided to me over those four days will stay with me for years to come," says Smith.

Grass adds, "High school counselors should recommend that college-bound teens attend a career camp to give them the opportunity to change their plans or reassure them their career choice suits them." 🐾

*View OU career camp descriptions, photos and videos and more at [oakland.edu/careercamps](http://oakland.edu/careercamps).*



# COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

## School of Nursing strengthens ties to Macomb County by building partnerships

by Patti Georgevich  Josh Scott

Community collaborations help prepare Oakland University School of Nursing (SON) students to remedy the real-world needs of the populations they'll serve as health care professionals.

In Macomb County, SON's partnerships with Henry Ford Macomb School Health Network, Salvation Army, Macomb County Communications and Technology Center (COMTEC) and more strengthen OU's ties to the community while granting nursing students experiential learning opportunities.

"Nurses have to consider how to best serve vulnerable populations. This thoughtful outreach helps our students better understand the needs within their own communities," says SON adjunct instructor and RN-BSN program coordinator, Kim Holka, (DNP, MSA, RN, APHN-BC, CNE). "Groups and organizations reach out to me as well and say, 'Let's work on this.' It's a win-win, and it's rewarding to see SON students develop and help these groups meet their organizational goals."

Judy Didion, Ph.D., RN and SON dean, explains, "As a dedicated partner member of the Macomb County community, OU SON wants to prepare future nurses who have the knowledge and skills to support and promote health of populations. Taking students beyond the classroom, laboratory and textbook and into the community is essential to achieve this goal."

SON alum, Jill Yore, RN, is the director of Henry Ford Macomb School Health Network. Through collaboration with the network, SON students access resources and equipment useful during nursing students' clinical routines, whether it be a glow light and lotion that simulates germs for a basic hygiene lesson or DUI training goggles for drinking and driving simulations.

To fulfill a course assignment, SON students volunteer at the Salvation Army – serving lunch and dinner at the soup kitchen and interacting with those supported by the organization.

*"This experience caused me to reflect. I felt like I was doing good helping to prepare and serve, but I also felt like I needed to do more. As they came through the food lines — young and old — I wanted to know more about their situations. These people live in my community and are disabled or struggling with addictions or mental health issues. They were grateful for the meal and I was grateful for the humbling interactions and experience to support the good work the Salvation Army does for those in need."*

— Angelique Mattison

SON's recent collaboration with COMTEC — a provider of natural disaster response training for Macomb County residents and businesses — prompted Dr. Holka to incorporate training students in an evidence-based presentation into the nursing program curriculum.

"I'm working with its emergency management team on a new course that we'll be implementing in the master's program for forensic nursing," says Dr. Holka. "The first program took place in May, and it's really helping SON students get to know the material and what's available; what to know in an emergency and what should be in an emergency bag."

Dr. Holka is a volunteer or board member for the Henry Ford School Health Network, L'Anse Creuse Public Schools Reproductive Committee, Michigan Coalition for Fetal Alcohol Resources Education and Support, the Colorectal Cancer Awareness Network, Macomb County Health Department Medical Reserve Corps and more.

"Through the collaborations we're spearheading in Macomb County, SON is fostering nursing education for the next generation of health care professionals and focusing on our profession's transformation — where nurses lead and are empowered to be change agents," says Dr. Didion. "We are responding to trends in the field that focus on improving the health of the population through preventative care, promotion, well-being and education in community-based settings — all to affect positive patient outcomes and care.

"It is these collaborative initiatives that allow the SON to bring our students from the classroom to the Macomb County communities," Dr. Didion adds.

"We want our presence to be seen and felt because meaningful interactions make the most impact," she says. "The SON will always seek opportunities to partner and collaborate to benefit our students' learning outcomes and give back to the community." 🌟

**OU offers its accelerated second degree Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at the OU Anton/Frankel Center in Mount Clemens.**



OU's Kim Holka (DNP, MSA, RN, APHN-BC, CNE) with Lieutenant Jakub Kocyan of The Salvation Army Mount Clemens Citadel Corps

### SON ALSO PARTNERS WITH:

- McLaren Macomb and Henry Ford Macomb Hospital to provide clinical experiences for students
- Turning Point to provide clinical experiences at the shelter and continuing education training in sexual assault and domestic violence
- Michigan Coalition for Fetal Alcohol Resources Education and Support to educate expectant mothers on the dangers of alcohol consumption
- Healthy People 2020 Forum to examine national health objectives and how they may be tailored for Macomb County
- L'Anse Creuse Public School System to give nursing students experiential learning opportunities
- Warren Woods Tower High School's "Drumming for Your Health," working with the school nurse, Sue Putnam, RN, on the therapeutic method that accommodates those who are physically disabled — as well as job shadowing for nurses and nursing students
- Chesterfield's Green Elementary School and Troy's Wattles Elementary School on the American Red Cross Pillowcase Project to provide emergency preparedness for third and fourth graders conducted by forensic nursing graduate students
- Macomb County Health Department Medical Reserve Corps for youth preparedness, Point of Dispensing training and mock emergency preparedness training activities
- Utica High School for its Infant Safe Sleep Training
- Macomb Intermediate School District's Family Youth Intervention 24-hour crisis management system for teens
- Macomb County organizations short on volunteers or health care worker assistance, when nursing students can help fill gaps





## ACADEMIC *achiever*

### OU alum Zita Burton leaves legacy of teaching excellence

Zita Burton, SEHS '77, always followed three principles as a Havel Elementary School teacher: “Strive for my personal best, be kind of heart and never lose my sense of humor,” she says.

Guided by her “classroom codes,” Burton provided a positive learning environment for thousands of students throughout her four-decade career as an educator in Sterling Heights. And at a March 22 award ceremony, she was named the 2017 Utica Community Schools Teacher of the Year.

The Macomb County resident graduated from Oakland University with an elementary education degree and earned her master’s degree at Saginaw Valley State University.

*“OU influenced me throughout my teaching career. Best practices guided the curriculum and became my classroom techniques,”*

says Burton. “I recall being in Professor Brian Murphy’s and Professor Richard Stamps’ classes and felt their passion for teaching. I knew I wanted to share that same enthusiasm with elementary school children.”

She adds, “During my field study at Roosevelt Elementary School, I knew teaching was for me. OU’s philosophy of hands-on learning is a hallmark of its elementary education degree program.”

As part of her Teacher of the Year award, Burton received a free two-year lease to a new black Mustang, courtesy of Suburban Ford.

“The Mustang whispered to me the moment I saw it on the lot,” she says. “It was delivered with a white bow and I knew it was love.”

“When you think of someone who makes a difference and is a champion for children, you think of Zita,” says principal of Havel Elementary, Kristina Barel, who nominated Burton in the elementary teaching award category. “Her compassion, patience and faith in her students reflects who she is and what she believes. She’s given so much of herself to her students and our staff that her legacy, values and belief in students have been passed on.”

Jennifer (Rymsza) Sutter, SEHS '03, did her field study for her elementary education degree with Burton at Havel. In 2004, Sutter became a teacher at Havel.

Sutter says, “Zita taught me to try techniques to improve learning. She would say to her students, ‘help me understand your reasoning.’ She wanted them to share their process — whether they were right or wrong — so everyone understood there’s more than one way to solve a problem.

“She’s inspiring, iconic and irreplaceable. We all want to be like her, but Zita’s in a class all her own. My eight-year-old son adores her. When he learned why she’d won the Mustang (after a test drive with Burton), he said, ‘Ms. Zita is the best. She’s like Yoda — only much, much younger,’” says Sutter.

Burton retired from Havel on June 15 and shared this advice for future elementary school teachers: “Remember, each child is different. Always create an atmosphere in your classroom where children feel comfortable talking and sharing. You’ll face challenges, but it’s all right to make mistakes.” ➤



## MATCH MADE *in* MACOMB

### OU celebrates 25-year Macomb Community College partnership

by Patti Georgevich  Courtesy of Macomb Community College

In 1986, Macomb Community College — the second-largest community college in Michigan and one of the largest in the nation — undertook a feasibility study. It showed Macomb County residents lagged behind those in Oakland and Wayne counties in both bachelor's degrees attained and annual salaries earned.

Macomb's President, Albert Lorenzo, Ph.D., had a vision: provide a location in Macomb County for residents to earn their bachelor's degrees. The study led to a 1988 millage to establish the University Center (UC) at Macomb's Clinton Township campus.

Dr. Lorenzo needed universities willing to partner and offer classes leading to a bachelor's degree. His first call was to Oakland University's President Joseph Champagne, Ph.D.

"I knew there was strong demand but I had no paradigm, predictive model or proof-of-concept to demonstrate its viability. I told Dr. Champagne it would be the first-of-its-kind in the nation. I was asking for an incredible leap of faith," says Dr. Lorenzo. "Dr. Champagne said yes without hesitation."

The UC's doors opened on Aug. 26, 1991 with OU as one of three university partners. In September 2016, the UC

celebrated its 25th anniversary. Today, OU has the largest enrollment of the 11 partner schools.

"OU has always responded to the educational needs of those who live and work in Macomb County," says Julie Dichtel, OU executive director of Macomb County Outreach. "Our commitment to the county strengthened when we became a partner at the UC. Increasing bachelor's degree attainment in Macomb County means we're producing workforce-ready and employable graduates to embark on new or revitalized careers in advanced manufacturing, engineering, defense, and health care."

Transfer students are an important part of OU's student body. Approximately 41 percent began their college journey as a transfer student and more than 26 percent of those started at Macomb.

"As a metropolitan university, many employed students spend a great deal of time commuting. The UC location allows us to collaborate with our academic units to provide coursework to post-traditional, adult and transfer students so they can live, work and earn their degrees in Macomb County," Dichtel adds.

OU provides academic advising to transfer students enrolled at the UC to help them stay on track to a timely graduation.

Kevin Chandler, Macomb's dean of university relations, says, "OU has been an outstanding partner with Macomb in developing collaborative opportunities for our students to complete their advanced degrees at the UC. Our respective staffs work jointly to ensure transfer student success."

*"Earnestly fulfilling OU's community-focused mission requires not only that we provide the highest quality education programs possible, but also that we create a diverse array of pathways for students to follow in completing those programs," says OU's Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost James Lentini, DMA. "We look forward to continuing our strong partnership with Macomb at the UC in fulfillment of that mission."*

Dr. Lorenzo's UC model that OU helped bring to life is now replicated on more than 200 community college campuses across the nation.

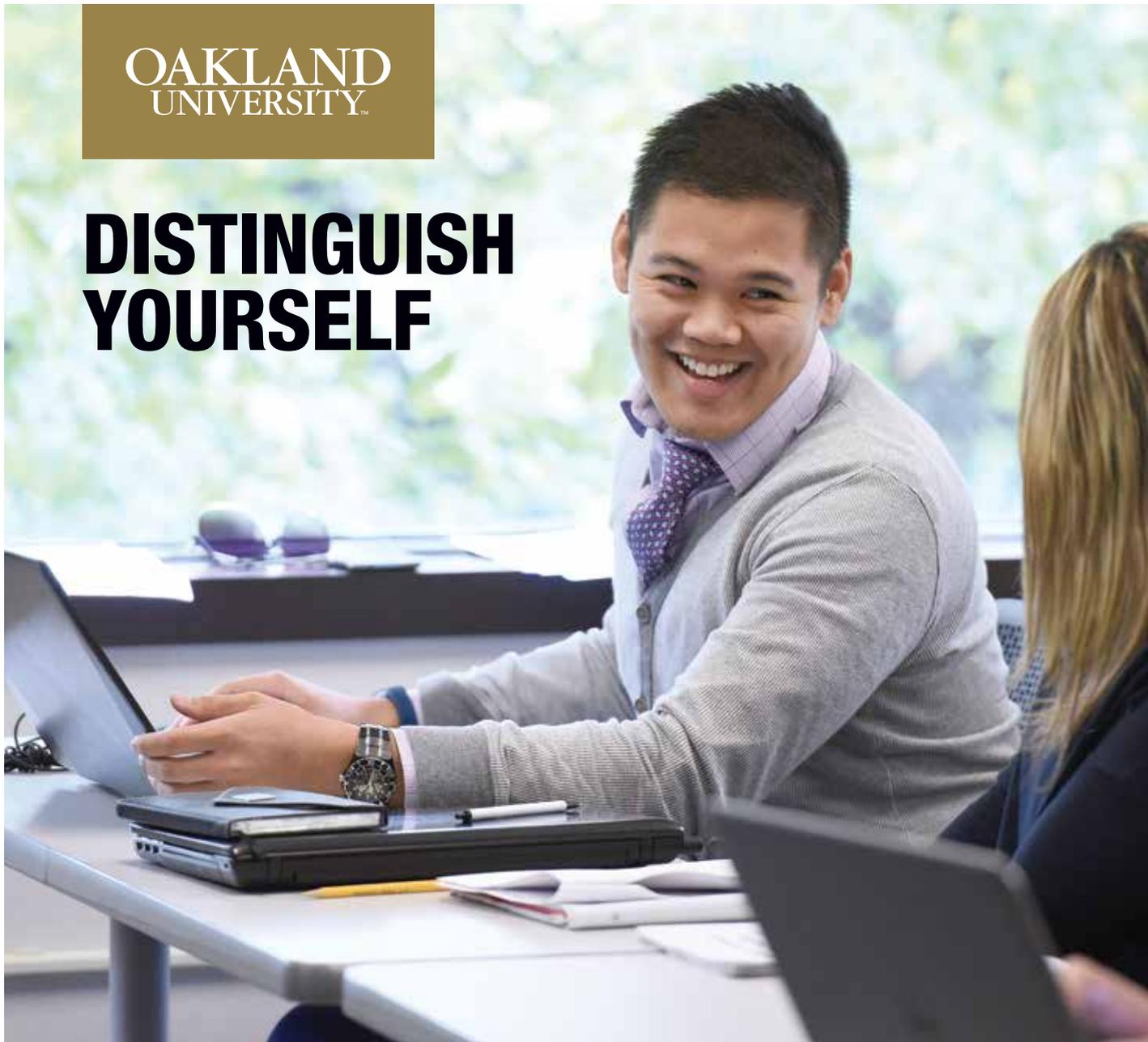
Macomb Community College President James O. Sawyer IV, Ed.D., says, "Over the years, thousands of students have started their education at Macomb Community College and successfully transferred to OU to complete their baccalaureate and advanced degrees. Dr. Lorenzo's vision from almost 30 years ago is more applicable today than ever. Macomb and OU have worked together to provide a high-quality education and pioneer new initiatives that have transformed students' lives and become national models." ➤



James Sawyer, Ed.D., current Macomb Community College president; Albert Lorenzo, Ph.D., president emeritus of Macomb Community College (1979–2008); and James Jacobs, Ph.D., president emeritus of Macomb Community College (2008–June 2017) at the September 2016 25th anniversary event.

OAKLAND  
UNIVERSITY™

# DISTINGUISH YOURSELF



Macomb County has been an integral part of Oakland University's growth since the institution's founding 60 years ago. OU is committed to making an impact in Macomb County by enriching lives through expanded access to higher education, nurturing college-bound youth, supporting economic development and engaging with alumni and local communities.

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**Learn more at [oakland.edu/macomb](http://oakland.edu/macomb).**

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