

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Leadership changes and OU's post-pandemic future

March 5, 2021

As Spring approaches, we mark a year since we took our initial preventative measures in curbing the spread of COVID-19. Your commitment, compliance and diligence to uphold the state, county and campus health policies are major reasons our campus has not had a virus outbreak.

Despite the anxiety, uncertainty and weariness that we all have felt, I am extremely proud of how we have adjusted to the ongoing unpredictability caused by a pandemic that has impacted every aspect of our daily and public lives.

In the past year, I've learned when we pull together for a shared purpose and care for each other, we rise to the challenge and are capable of great accomplishments. That is a silver lining and invaluable lesson to carry into the post-pandemic future.

New Leadership Openings

A shortcoming of working remotely is that many of us miss daily interactions with the talented people who have played major roles in the leadership of our university.

In the past month, two of those exceptional people announced their retirements. Vic Zambardi, Vice President for Legal Affairs/Secretary to the Board of Trustees, will retire effective April 2; and, Ron Watson, Vice President of Human Resources, will retire June 30.

We wish Vic and Ron the best as they turn to the next chapters of their lives, and greatly appreciate their many years of leadership, service and dedication to Oakland University.

In the upcoming weeks, formal searches will commence to fill their positions. Peggy Cooke, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, will chair the search committee for the Vice President of Human Resources, and Steve Waterfield, Director of Athletics Administration, will chair the search committee to select the university's General Legal Counsel.

Upon Vic's retirement, Boyd Farnam will assume responsibilities as the Interim General Counsel. Boyd is the senior Assistant General Counsel, and has notably represented the university in a range of legal matters.

For now, Vic's responsibilities to oversee OUPD and Risk Management will be assigned to John Beaghan, Vice President of Finance and Administration; and, Chief of Staff Joshua Merchant will direct Internal Audit, and serve as Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Meanwhile, the search led by Dean Michael Mazzeo (School of Business Administration) for the new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the search for the new Chief Information Officer led by Tom LeMarbe, Associate Vice President of Finance and Administration, are underway.

At a time of transition in key leadership positions, I am grateful for the expertise and wisdom of those OU leaders who are moving on, and look forward to the new perspectives from the next generation of leaders selected from what will no doubt be an impressive pool of candidates.

Looking Ahead

With a third vaccine on its way and vaccination supplies increasing rapidly, it looks as if anyone who wants a vaccination should get one by the end of May or sooner. This latest development along with the OU community's successful response to the COVID-19 threat brings us closer to repopulating campus.

Currently, the President's Strategy Council is drafting a "Return to Campus" plan. In the days ahead, the OU leadership team will provide the vision and specific initiatives that will once again provide for a safe and thriving campus environment. Regular updates will be shared with the OU community.

We look forward to the day when we will again walk side by side, attend athletic events at the O'rena, gather for lectures and special events, and meet friends for lunch at the Oakland Center.

As we head into Spring, join with me in appreciating the signs of renewal and new beginnings.

Ora

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President