

OU on the Road – Florida V2
President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz's Remarks
Saturday, February 19, 2022

**NOTE: 15-minute Lunchtime address to alumni,
retirees, donors.**

GREETINGS/INTRODUCTION

- It's so good to be with you here in Florida, where the sun actually comes out each day.
 - I love Michigan in the winter, but there are days when we could certainly use more blue sky...maybe less snow....better driving conditions... some warmer weather...
 - Can you tell I'm looking forward to spring?
- After two years of dealing with the pandemic at Oakland University, we're heading toward more sunshine...normalcy, albeit a new normal.
- There have been many lessons in the past few years, but none more important than realizing the importance of our health, and knowing that flexibility and persistence are qualities that we all need in dealing with the unexpected.

- Building a university requires support from like-minded people who believe education is the key to opportunity, and the bedrock of a civilized society.
- We are so fortunate to have your support and friendship.

RECONNECTING

- I'd like to take a few minutes to share with you why we're so optimistic about what is ahead for Oakland University... and the important role you play in supporting our mission.
 - We remain committed to doing all we can to ensure that our students succeed academically and are prepared for rewarding careers...
 - And, we are committed to research and community partnerships that foster economic development and improved education, health care, and civic engagement.
- Universities and colleges across the country are dealing with financial issues caused by the pandemic.
 - Enrollment has been declining steadily at a time when the pool of high school graduates has been decreasing.

- And, until just these past few weeks, state funding has been uncertain.
- But today, I'm quite excited to report that Oakland could receive a more than five percent increase from the state¹ in addition to a one-time, five-percent allocation. This budget proposal from Michigan's governor has been submitted to legislators for consideration.
- These proposed increases to the budget, including item funding for things like infrastructure, technology, maintenance and more, are an exciting outcome of our major initiative – Strive for 45 – to create equity in the funding among the state's 15 public universities. This proposal demonstrates the power of Oakland's vision, advocacy and support.
- Plus, these changes to the higher education budget proposal have the most bipartisan support.
- We are hopeful that an increase in state funding will be a new chapter in public support.

¹ The response from the state is because of the higher than expected revenue from the federal money related to Covid relief, and the better-than-expected tax revenue from the Michigan's automotive industry.

- Since last fall, students have returned to campus for in-person classes. Having students on campus is an inspiring reminder of why we have such an important job in higher education.
 - We are interacting with students at a critical time — when they are making decisions that will determine the trajectory of their lives.
- And with 97 percent of OU graduates staying to work in the state, their decisions are the backbone of our region’s economy.

OU NEWS

- Since we last came to Florida to meet with many of you, there has been more exciting news at OU, particularly in the area of strategic growth.
- We have finalized architectural plans for the new South Foundation Hall.
 - The new building will be equipped with state-of-the-art teaching capabilities.
- We are making much-needed renovations to Varner Hall, including updates to a performance space that enhances the School of Music, Theatre and Dance.

- In the past year, we purchased a building south of campus to serve as a home for Oakland’s technological and engineering research.
 - We have a great opportunity to partner with manufacturing and technology companies, large and small, throughout the region on breakthrough research to support electric vehicles, autonomous technologies, cyber security and new composite materials.
 - In fact, the National Science Foundation awarded a \$3.2M grant to OU for "CyberCorps Scholarship for Service: Cyber Defense of Intelligent Systems."
 - The project is a collaborative effort with Georgia Tech and University of Tennessee-Knoxville.
- We are launching a physician’s assistant program next year, an important and growing field in health care, as well as a Master of Social Work program which will begin to accept students this fall.
- We continue to have success in our philanthropic efforts, with growing support of the “Aspire. Advance. Achieve.” comprehensive campaign. We have now raised 71% of our \$150M campaign goal. In 2021, we raised \$24M compared with \$18.3M in 2020, and \$15.3M in 2019.

- Our appreciation to Mike and his team for our continued success.

- Thanks to all of you, OU is moving ahead.

RESPONSIVE TO STUDENTS' NEEDS

- For many, the last two years of the pandemic has profoundly affected the expectations of a college experience and the value of a college degree.
 - Within this fast-changing context, we strive to be responsive to current and prospective students.

 - During the pandemic, our undergraduate admissions office has not required standardized ACT or SAT testing as a prerequisite for enrollment.

 - Like many universities, we are questioning whether these types of tests are accurate predictions of academic success, and whether we should permanently adopt a test-optional model.

- We are also mindful that many of today's students do not fit the conventional student model.

- Whether working full-time or supporting themselves and families, today's students need a highly flexible class schedule.
- In response, our focus is on providing excellent in-person classes, and offering more options for accelerated and hybrid delivery of courses.
 - And, we appreciate that many faculty record their lectures to give students more options on when and where they can review an in-class talk.
- Our 4+1 degrees is an example of how we are addressing today's students' need for classes, programs and degrees that fit their busy schedules.
 - 4 + 1 degrees allow students to work with their advisor in plotting the most efficient and cost-effective path to earning a bachelor's AND master's degree.
- As we all know, affordability is at the top of students' concerns.
 - We realize many students start their college journey at community colleges, either because they are not ready for a 4-year university or as a way to control expenses.

- We work with our community college partners to make sure that community college credits are transferable to Oakland, and that students do not waste any credits or money on their path to earning a bachelor's degree.
- And we are so proud that Oakland is among the first universities in Michigan to address student debt in a meaningful and impactful way.
 - OU's average student debt is below both the national and the state average.
 - And, we spend the equivalent of our entire state budget on financial aid to our students.
- The Golden Grizzlies Graduate program assists students who are considered "stop outs" because they are not enrolled because they can't afford college or they simply have to respond to other demands.
 - Students receive up to \$500 per semester for the Comebacker Grant. And, up to \$1,000 per semester for the Completion Grant.
 - Since Fall of 2019, we have served 313 students. As of Fall 2021, 169 of those students have graduated, and another 22 students are degree candidates this semester.

FINAL WORD

- These are exciting times at Oakland University, but there can be no doubt that higher education faces challenges.
 - Each day, our success requires a recommitment to our mission and the support from our friends and donors.
 - And, I want to thank you for being such a valuable friend and for the instrumental role you play in our success.
 - You have been there for us. And you have made and ARE MAKING a fundamental difference.
 - I hope that we make you proud.

- Thank you.