*FALL COMMENCEMENT REMARKS*
President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz
December 5, 2020

- Congratulations graduates…

- You know at commencement ceremonies, I always look forward to seeing the unique faces of the graduates.

- I always appreciate that look of achievement, purpose, and, yes, relief.

- Today, we meet virtually because these are not ordinary times, but you – all of you, who have shown great perseverance and pride – are no ordinary graduates.

- You succeeded during what will be recorded as one of the most difficult social and economic periods in our history.

- I wish I could see each and every one of your faces.
  - I wish I could shake your hands.
o I also miss seeing the expressions on the faces of your friends, family members and parents, many of them who also share in your sense of achievement, and yes, relief.

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- Years and months ago, when we all thought of this moment, we figured we would be crowded into the O’rena in a very un-socially distanced way, surrounded by other graduates as they took their assigned place in a sea of black and gold.

- But life is filled with unexpected moments.
  o And the change of venue does not diminish this day – your day – when we come together to celebrate your great accomplishment.

- On this day, make sure you take many photos. The images will last a lifetime.
  o And so, too, will the building blocks of a lifetime of learning.
Every commencement ceremony should be a moment of idealism and optimism.

Today is no different.

All of us here at Oakland University, from the staff to administrators to the faculty, believe in you, and know you are up to the challenge of what lies ahead.

If you are like me, then you should look at these past nine months as delivering a resounding lesson.
  o What is that lesson?
  o Look around.
  o The lesson is clear: Never take life, your health, your family, your friends and the moment of opportunity for granted.

What you will do with your degree in hand will be essential as you find your way through life.
And as you travel along your path, remember: How you deal with the unexpected says as much or more about you than how you react to the predictable and mundane.

- I’d also like to consider the challenges we face in these times of pandemic. Ask yourself:
  - How can I do my part to help? Perhaps it’s someone you love, and perhaps it’s someone you don’t know.

- And today, take a moment to think of yourselves as capable of doing the extraordinary.

- Generations that have gone before you have also been defined by challenging times.
  - Some by war.
  - Some by economic depression.
  - Some by the struggle for Civil Rights and human dignity.

- Each generation has a defining moment where they have risen to the challenge.
Your time is now.
And I know you will succeed.

- Remember your perseverance and dedication during these difficult days has been an inspiration to many of us.

- And today, you become part of a proud tradition – the OU tradition.

- Congratulations…. We are so proud of you.