

**Michigan House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Higher Education & Community Colleges**

**Testimony Before the House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Higher Education & Community Colleges**

State Capitol Building – Lansing, Michigan

Thursday, Feb. 28, 2019

PRESIDENT PESCOVITZ'S REMARKS

Good morning Chairman VanSingel, Vice-Chair Bollin, Minority-Vice Chair Anthony, and other members of the subcommittee.

I am Ora Pescovitz, president of Oakland University (OU), located in Oakland County.

On behalf of the university, I'd like to extend my appreciation to this subcommittee for taking the time to learn more about us, and for us to learn more about you, your expectations and how we can work together effectively for the benefit of our state and the people who call Michigan home.

We consider these subcommittee meetings as an ongoing conversation about the invaluable role higher education plays in Michigan's economic, educational and cultural future.

I want to extend my appreciation to our colleagues and peer institutions in higher education that have come before you, or will soon address the committee. I know my colleagues share the view that the role of higher education is instrumental in the ongoing transformation of Michigan, from contributing to the health of our economy to enhancing the health of our citizens.

So, now, let me tell you about Oakland University.

We are a university that places the highest emphasis and priority on student success.

We are deeply committed to teaching, scholarship and research that transforms and improves the quality of our communities in southeastern Michigan, the state, and beyond.

Oakland University is a research university classified as a Doctoral University, High Research Activity by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As of December, we were elevated to the R2 ranking by Carnegie.

Our university takes pride in building and expanding a diverse and inclusive community of students, scholars, faculty and staff.

We have received the highest rating for veteran friendliness from the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency ¹ because of our comprehensive veteran support services. We take pride in being an accessible campus and having a range of disability support services. In addition, we've been honored as a welcoming campus having been named the most LGBTQ-friendly campus in Michigan.

The OU Trustee Academic Success Scholarship Program (OUTAS) continues to draw national attention for its six-year graduation rate² for underrepresented minority students, which consistently exceeds the university average graduation rate for majority students.

And, we are engaged in partnerships and collaborations with our surrounding communities to find better ways to address educational, economic development and civic issues.

¹ For the third straight year, Oakland University received a gold ranking, the highest possible rating for veteran-friendliness from the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA), February, 2019.

² OUTAS 6-year graduation rates for last three years: 82% (start year 2010); 78% (start year 2011); and, 71% (start year 2012). URM students make up approximately three-quarters of students in OUTAS program.

Oakland University was founded in 1957 with the generosity and vision of Matilda Dodge Wilson and her husband, Alfred Wilson. As you may know, in 1940, Mrs. Wilson was appointed the 43rd lieutenant governor of Michigan, making her the first woman to serve as a lieutenant governor in the United States.

The Wilsons used their wealth and property to create a lasting legacy of higher education with the purpose of positively affecting the lives of thousands of people and contributing to the economic vitality in the region. The legacy inspires and guides us along the path of creating a sustainable, thriving university and community.

Today, Oakland University is home to several of the region's cultural treasures, including Meadow Brook Hall, Meadow Brook Amphitheatre, Meadow Brook Theatre and art gallery. And, our Division-1 athletic facilities are enjoyed by and accessible to the community.

We are the 7th largest public university in Michigan, and among the fastest-growing in the state.

- In the fall of 2018, student enrollment stood at 19,309. That is a 5.1-percent increase in overall enrollment over the past ten years.
- In the fall of 2018, we welcomed our largest-ever freshman class, which grew by 9.9 percent over the 2017 class.
- Nearly 32 percent of our student population consists of first-generation students.

We have made a deliberate effort to diversify our student, faculty and staff populations. Our progress is measurable.

- Women make up 52.7% of the faculty.

- Underrepresented minorities (URM) students increased from 18.7% in August 2017 to 19.8% in January 2019, which represents an all-time high.
- URM employee headcount increased from 20% in August 2017 to 21.5% in January 2019.

The university had set a target 6-year graduation rate of 55 percent by 2025. By 2018, however, we reached that goal. That mark of achievement has motivated us to pursue higher graduation-rate targets. Furthermore, the 6-year graduation rate for underrepresented minority students has risen to a record 37.6 percent, and we are working diligently to improve that rate.

Like our peer public universities, the portion of our state funding as a revenue source has decreased dramatically. In 1972, state funding made up 71 percent of our budget. Today, state funding makes up only 17 percent.

Although we have the lowest state funding per student³ of the 15 public universities, we can demonstrate that we utilize the public funds efficiently and effectively, yielding an enormous return on investment. That impactful ROI is what happens after OU students graduate.

We are proud that OU grads are building the state economy and playing a vital role in educating and caring for the people of Michigan. We are especially gratified that overall about 97 percent of recent OU graduates who are employed are working in Michigan, including graduates in business, engineering, education, human services, health sciences, medicine, nursing, life and physical sciences and the arts.

³ State appropriations per fiscal-year equated student (FYES) for Oakland University: \$2,957. Average state funding per student of 15 public universities: \$5,610. Source: Fiscal year 2018-19 Higher Education Appropriations Report, A report to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Higher Education.

We support entrepreneurial business growth with incubators in Oakland and Macomb counties. The aim is to accelerate high-tech business development and cultivate innovation.

The Anderson Economic Group reports that the Oakland University community has an \$800 million impact on our economy.

During the challenging times of the last few decades, we have adhered to sound fiscal management practices and contained costs by over \$50 million since 2005.

As stewards of the many public resources on OU's campus, we have made prudent financial decisions with the oversight and consultation of our board of trustees. Today, as a 61-year-old institution that has steadily broadened its appeal and increased student enrollment, we are facing new challenges that require us to understand the changing landscape of higher education.

A significant part of the changing landscape includes our relationships with community colleges. About 40 percent of OU students transfer from community colleges. OU maintains articulation agreements with six community colleges across Michigan, and has relationships with all 28 community colleges in the state. The articulation agreements are critical for community college students for financial and academic reasons.

A vital part of Oakland University's mission is collaborating with and contributing to our communities.

We are particularly proud of our partnership with the city of Pontiac, which is based on six pillars: education, civic engagement, workforce and economic development, health and wellness, arts, and capacity building for neighborhoods and nonprofits.

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine⁴ and OU's School of Nursing are engaged in a range of community service activities, including a variety of health education initiatives and students serving as mentors.

Furthermore, we are a primary venue for public discourse on a range of contemporary issues, including race, ballot initiatives and political leadership along with regularly held public lectures about how history informs the present.

Our highly attended annual "Keeper of the Dream" celebration honors Martin Luther King, Jr., and spotlights remarkable students working for social justice. In addition, our School of Engineering hosts STEM camps to cultivate science, technology, engineering and math skills and serves as a means toward increasing the number of female and underrepresented minorities in STEM careers.

As an anchor institution and among the stewards of our region, our community engagement and outreach are fundamental to fulfilling our responsibility as a *public university* that provides a range of *public services*.

As this subcommittee considers funding support for public universities and colleges, please keep in mind that a quality, accessible and affordable education – at every level and in all 83 Michigan counties – is a major catalyst and an essential feature for transformational and positive change.

Working alongside the public and private sectors for a common purpose, we can further elevate the appeal, prospects and success of our state.

We look forward to building a productive partnership with all of you, and invite you to visit our campus either individually or as a subcommittee.

Thank you.

⁴ OUWB is a privately funded medical school in partnership with Beaumont Hospital and general funds (tuition and state appropriations) are not used to subsidize the school. Total applications for class of 2022 stood at 8,535 with a class size of 123. Students comes from 59 undergraduate institutions from around the U.S.