

Michigan House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Higher Education & Community Colleges

State Capitol Building – Lansing, Michigan

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Amy Thompson, Ph.D., FESG, CHES
Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs and Provost
Oakland University
Testimony

Good afternoon, Chairman Markkanen, Vice Chair Roth, Minority Vice Chair Longjohn and members of the subcommittee.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before you and offer testimony to the value, impact and promise of Oakland University.

I am Amy Thompson, executive vice president and provost at Oakland.

Higher education is at the center of a nexus in our society. It touches all facets of our collective effort to improve the lives of Michigan residents. We educate tomorrow's leaders, conduct vital research, and engage with urban, rural and suburban communities throughout our region for the purpose of enhancing education, public health, cultural awareness, job readiness, and economic development.

Among the tenets of Oakland's mission is to make college affordable, accessible and help to create a pathway to a lifetime of professional and personal success. For us to succeed, we must maintain and develop partnerships and collaborations within and outside of higher education. Our alliance with the state of Michigan is among our most vital, and one that we never take for granted.

On Thursday, April 17, this committee heard from Daniel Hurley, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. I extend my appreciation to MASU and our colleagues and peer institutions that have come or will soon address the committee. As an association, we stand together in favor of an increase in state operating support for public universities to

improve college affordability and passionately support the Michigan Achievement Scholarship as one of the ways we can accomplish that goal. Furthermore, maintaining and developing our university assets is fundamental to providing a modern, high-quality campus and infrastructure. That is why we advocate for ongoing investments in state capital outlay and asset maintenance funding.

#

In the materials submitted along with my formal testimony, you will find a historical overview, and a list of academic, research and community engagement accomplishments that distinguish Oakland as a preeminent public university. These achievements are the consequences of our commitment to what we refer to as five pathways that shape our vision as a university. These pathways include a focus on creating an inspiring workplace, supporting students' road to graduation, fostering a culture of discovery and research, elevating our efforts as stewards of place, and transforming Oakland into a sustainable university in the areas of physical maintenance, operating a dynamic business model and developing timely, responsive academic programs.

Each university has its unique features. At Oakland, we believe the following qualities distinguish our university:

- Nearly 92 percent of our student are from Michigan, and of those who graduate and are employed, more than 95 percent work in the state. It's the proof behind our claim that Oakland is the leading "brain gain" university in the state, and a talent pipeline in the region.

Furthermore, in "The Best Colleges in America" survey published by The Wall Street Journal in September, Oakland ranks third in Michigan among our peers for upward social mobility for students, and the fourth best value higher education institution in the state.

- About 39 percent of our students are the first in their immediate family to pursue postsecondary education. That is a bold and impressive number that underscores Oakland's role in expanding access to a college education.
- At a time of inflating student debt, 52 percent of Oakland students graduate with no debt, and those who have debt owe on average \$22,750, which is below the national average¹.

- Oakland is the number two destination for transfer students in Michigan, due in part to our proactive admissions strategy and partnerships with Oakland and Macomb Community Colleges, among other higher education institutions.
- Based on the preliminary findings of an economic impact study conducted by the Anderson Group, Oakland graduates earn 9 percent more than peer college alumni. The average median salary of Oakland graduates is \$63,500.
- Oakland's President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz has built a national reputation for her commitment to higher education, research and health. A former CEO of the University of Michigan Health and preeminent pediatric endocrinologist, she has pushed for health-based policies on campus and advocated for more effective public health policies. Post-Covid, Oakland is bolstering support for the physical and mental health needs of our campus community.
- Oakland has distinguished itself as a health-services educator. Our School of Nursing is ranked 78th nationally, and our nurse anesthesia program ranks second in Michigan, and 36th on U.S. News & World Report's 2024 list.
- In January 2024, Oakland received the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, a prestigious status and resounding endorsement for our work with and in the city of Pontiac. The national recognition is a distinctive accomplishment that demonstrates our claim as a preeminent "stewards of place."
- Oakland is an R2 research university as defined by Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Last year, Oakland rose to 233rd among 637 U.S. universities federally ranked by research expenditures and above all our Michigan university peers. Twelve Oakland faculty members appeared on Stanford's List of top 2 percent of "Scientists in the World."

#

These distinguishing points are just a few of the many ways Oakland demonstrates its value to students, our communities and the state of Michigan. I'd like to move on to briefly point to the

¹ In *The Wall Street Journal's* "Best Colleges" in America survey, Oakland graduates pay off their debt in just 19 months, on average.

impact of our university in four notable areas: student career preparation, economic impact, state tax revenue, and research and development.

Oakland offers more than 100 degrees and graduates several thousand students annually. Our graduates are employed in health care and social assistance, education, manufacturing, scientific and technical services, finance and insurance, information and data services, to name a few. More than 60 percent of graduates complete their degrees.

At Oakland, we firmly believe in integrating academics with real-world experience. It's the proven theory-and-practice approach that best prepares our graduates for career success.

In February, we launched the OU Pledge, which guarantees an opportunity for an internship to every student. Based on a destination survey that measures our alumni career outcomes, 91 percent of graduates completed an internship related to their field and 96 percent received "helpful career advice" from our Career and Life Design Center and counselors around campus.

In southeastern Michigan populated by a Who's Who of international (perhaps Fortune 500) business with a diverse range of small-and medium sized companies, Oakland is a prime catalyst for the area's economic growth.

Preliminary findings of an Anderson Economic Group study found that in fiscal year 2024, Oakland created \$1.9 billion in net new economic activity that translated into the creation of 6,485 jobs. That economic activity generated \$316 million in state tax revenue, which is approximately four times the state allocation the university received. In other words, every \$1 the state invests in Oakland generates \$4 back to Michigan. We believe that is a compelling testament of the value of the state's investment in Oakland University.

#

And now, I want to talk about the future.

Earlier, I mentioned Oakland's sterling reputation in health care education. A key initiative, supported by Representative Mark Tisdell, is THE BEST, which stands for Transforming Health Care Education By Elevating State-of-the-Art Teaching and Learning. We are seeking supplemental state support for this workforce development initiative. Details of the initiative are included in your packets.

Over the past year-and-a-half, Oakland embarked on a strategic visioning process that included extensive conversations with faculty, staff, students and key stakeholders. At a time of rapid changes in higher education, Oakland is diligently planning and preparing for a range of scenarios and is committed to navigating the future based on our mission and values.

Among the timely initiatives in our newly minted Strategic Vision, are several related to providing more teaching support so we can respond to students' learning needs, a plan to retain and recruit students, an intense focus on community-based research, a nimble model for community engagement to serve all types of communities, and an exploration of broader sources of revenue.

As we look ahead to the immediate future, we are setting our priorities based on revenue projections from state appropriations and tuition. In the current 2024-25 fiscal year, universities received an overall increase of 1.5 percent for base operations, which, of course, is below the rate of inflation. Respectfully, we request that this subcommittee consider the recommendation presented by the State Budget Office for fiscal year 2025-26 that proposes a 4-percent across-the-board increase in university operations contingent on restraining undergraduate tuition to 4.5 percent.

We consider the 4-percent increase to be in line with what is required for Oakland to continue to be a university that demonstrates its value, engages with our communities and is a catalyst for economic development.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the value, impact and promise of Oakland University.

And now, I will yield the remainder of my allotted time to Marion Brumer, vice president of the Oakland University Student Congress.

Michigan House Appropriations

Subcommittee on Higher Education & Community Colleges

State Capitol Building – Lansing, Michigan

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Marion Brumer

Vice President, Student Congress

Oakland University

Testimony

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and esteemed members of the subcommittee.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to come before you all to offer a testimony on behalf of the Oakland University student body, regarding the impactfulness of the education my university provides.

I am Marion Brumer, and I am currently serving as the Student Body Vice President.

I hold junior standing as of this semester, and I am pursuing a bachelors in political science with a minor in economics. I moved from Roseville to Rochester Hills when I was in second grade, and have resided there since. I graduated from Rochester High School in May of 2023, and began classes at Oakland in September of that year.

Affordability has always been my priority when making decisions about my educational path, which contributed to the fact that when I started classes at Oakland I gained 20 course credits

from my AP exams. This was huge for me because I knew prior to graduation that I did not have enough college savings to complete my degree, and I was able to save a semester's worth of tuition. Furthermore, I live a short 15 minute drive from Oakland meaning that I could commute and save on living expenses, which made Oakland the obvious choice after graduation.

On behalf of Michigan high school graduates who are privileged enough to access higher education, I cannot express how immensely my peers and I appreciate Governor Whitmer and the Michigan Legislature for proposing and funding initiatives such as the Michigan Achievement Scholarship.

Although I did not personally benefit from this program, many incoming, first-year OU students have. Our Office of Enrollment Management reports that over 2,500 students are the recipients of the \$5,500 Michigan Achievement scholarship in 2024-2025.

I understand that Governor Whitmer has proposed a \$50 million dollar investment to fully fund the scholarship in future years, and I cannot express how impactful this would be for so many Oakland Students.

In the year that I have served as Vice President of the Student Body, I have worked to advocate for affordability from access to resources to merit based financial aid reform, and I have become more aware of the financial burden many students experience. I believe that fully funding affordability initiatives, such as the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, would supplement ongoing affordability initiatives at Oakland and create meaningful change for many Michigan residents.

On behalf of my constituency, the Oakland Student Body, I would like to conclude by saying that we support this much-needed scholarship and related efforts to make a college education more affordable and accessible. I implore you all to thoroughly consider the proposed investment recommended by the governor, as it would have far reaching effects for not only Oakland Students, but all Michigan residents seeking higher education.

As a political science enthusiast, I will likely never forget the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee. Thank you all for your time, patience, and consideration.