

**Agendum  
Oakland University  
Board of Trustees Formal Session  
February 15, 2021**

**APPOINTMENT OF DAVID GARFINKLE TO THE RANK  
OF DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR  
A Recommendation**

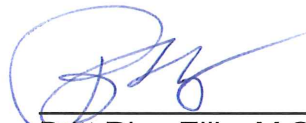
1. **Division and Department:** Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.
2. **Introduction:** In 1988 the Board of Trustees (Board) created the faculty rank of Distinguished Professor. Upon recommendation of the President and Provost, the Board may appoint individuals to the rank of Distinguished Professor for the duration of the individual's active service at Oakland University. Appointments to distinguished professorships are based on the candidate's efforts and accomplishments in the areas of teaching, intellectual contributions and service, giving consideration to the programmatic and institutional setting of the candidate's work at Oakland and the nature of the candidate's assignments and responsibilities, the quality of the candidate's accomplishments and the relation of all the foregoing factors to the objectives of the area or departments, the goals of the college or school, and the mission and long-range vision of the University.
3. **Previous Board Action:** The Board has periodically appointed individuals to the rank of Distinguished Professor at Formal Sessions of the Board.
4. **Budget Implications:** A one-time salary stipend of \$2,500 plus an annual supplies and services allocation of \$1,500, up to five years, for the Distinguished Professor will be paid from the Provost's Discretionary Fund.
5. **Educational Implications:** Recognition of a distinguished faculty member's long-standing dedication to the mission of the institution reinforces a culture that is devoted to excellence in teaching, research, creative endeavor, and service.
6. **Personnel Implications:** None.
7. **University Reviews/Approvals:** A selection committee of his peers recommended David Garfinkle in the College of Arts and Sciences for approval to Dr. Britt Rios-Ellis, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, to the appointment of Distinguished Professor.

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8. **Recommendation:** RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees approves the appointment of David Garfinkle, Professor of Physics, to the rank of Distinguished Professor, effective August 15, 2021.

9. **Attachment:** Biography of David Garfinkle.

Submitted to the President  
on 2/11, 2021 by



Britt Rios-Ellis, M.S., Ph.D.  
Executive Vice President for  
Academic Affairs and Provost

Recommendation on 2-12, 2021  
to the Board for Approval by



Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.  
President

## Biography

### David Garfinkle, Ph.D.

Ph.D., University of Chicago

Professor

[Publications](#)

[Research Interests](#)

Professor Garfinkle, is an outstanding scientist and leader in the field of general relativity, and especially its application to black holes and the big bang. He has a worldwide reputation as an expert on spacetime singularities. He is one of the world leaders in exploring numerical investigations of near singularities in general relativity, as well as gravitational radiation memory, his expansive and international citations are truly impressive. His scholarship is recognized and respected worldwide and has played a significant role in shaping the field. Professor of Physics at Princeton University, Frans Pretorius, argues that Dr. Garfinkle is among a small handful of scholars that have done ground-breaking research using both analytical and numerical methods in general relativity. He writes, "What I hope the...examples of David's work illustrate is not only that he has made significant contributions to a variety of problems...but he also attacks problems with a creative and refreshing perspective that stimulates research outside of the immediate scope of the work." The variety of his contributions is also noteworthy. Award winning books such as *Three Steps to the Universe: From the Sun to Black Holes to the Mystery of Dark Matter* on black holes and dark matter (published by The University of Chicago Press) serve to expand the reach of his intellectual contributions while also making his expertise accessible to those with an interest in the subject but lack the mathematical depth and acumen to read his academic contributions. This is a true contribution to science as this type of scholarship opens the door for anyone to

engage with the subject matter. His work has been funded by NSF, NSERC, and the Research Corporation. He is a Fellow of the American Physical Society, a member of the Foundational Questions Institute and was an Associate of the Cosmology and Gravity Program of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and a Kavli Institute of Theoretical Physics Scholar (twice).

Professor Garfinkle also is a versatile teacher who teaches courses in introductory physics, astronomy, modern physics, mathematical methods for physicists, numerical methods for physicists, mechanics, electricity and magnetism, quantum mechanics, thermodynamics, and nuclear physics many at both the undergraduate and graduate level. He has served as the chief advisor in the department of Physics and has served as an external examiner for PhD theses from McGill, the University of Southampton, the University of Manitoba, the University of Potsdam, the University of Otago, and as a Habilitationsschrift for the University of Jena. He is also generous with his time contributing extensively to the profession as well as in the department, college and university. He has received an award as an outstanding referee from the American Physical Society. Professor Garfinkle is highly respected by his OU colleagues who have on numerous occasions expressed their admiration of his academic stamina over the years and describe him as a model example of a faculty who should be awarded the rank of Distinguished Professor.