

Friday, April 24, 2020

Actions taken to preserve OU's long-term future

Cost-savings help prepare for anticipated revenue shortage

To the Oakland University community,

The past two months have been profoundly challenging for all of us.

We have learned to adapt to restrictions on our travel, social distancing, and significant changes in how we work and live. We are witness to how the coronavirus has exacerbated the social and economic inequities around us. And, whereas many of us are anxious and stressed from living apart from our friends and family, there are many examples of the resiliency of the human spirit and inspiring stories that reflect our capacity for compassion and kindness.

Throughout this time, our primary responsibility has been the protection, safety and health of the OU community. Thanks to our dedicated faculty and staff, the precautionary measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19 on campus have proven successful.

I am so proud of our students, faculty and staff for stepping up and adapting to the "new normal." Your willingness to acclimate to remote learning and adhere to social distancing requirements have been remarkable and are allowing us to successfully "flatten the curve."

Further, your courage and willingness to volunteer to help others in need throughout metro Detroit engenders great pride in being part of the Oakland University tradition of demonstrating compassion for others.

Upcoming Semesters: Summer online learning; preparing scenarios for fall

For both summer sessions, we have concluded that it is necessary to continue to deliver instruction exclusively through online learning. Fortunately, enrollment for our summer sessions is encouraging.

At this point, indications are that COVID-19 will remain a threat into the fall. The OU Coronavirus Response Team continues to meet regularly to prepare for a combination of viral and serology testing, contact tracing, and social distancing to ensure a safe and healthy campus environment.

As we prepare for the fall semester, we are planning for a hybrid approach that includes both face-to-face and remote instruction.

As always, the health and safety of our campus remains our highest priority. Our efforts have been recognized. On Thursday, the annual [rankings of safest college campuses](#) in America ranked Oakland the safest college campus in Michigan and third safest in the country.

OU Principles

Higher education institutions across the country are facing serious financial uncertainty and profound challenges.

During these precarious times, our obligation is to act prudently and decisively to best position Oakland for the path ahead. Although we hope for the best, we must confront difficult financial realities, and plan for a significant budgetary shortfall this year.

In facing these challenges, our duty is to “cultivate the full potential of a diverse and inclusive community,” and passionately support the transformative power of education and research. Our highest priorities are to: 1.) Protect the health and safety of our people; and, 2.) Uphold our mission, vision and goals.

Actions: Salary reductions, hiring freeze, suspension of non-essential projects

Keeping the university’s long-term future and success in mind, we will enact immediately the following cost-saving measures:

- **Executive salary reductions (i.e. president, cabinet, deans)** — Reductions for executives and Deans range from 3 to 5 percent with the President taking a 20 percent reduction.
- **Hiring freeze** – Exceptions to the hiring freeze must be approved by the President. Searches for key open positions currently underway will continue.
- **Suspension of non-bond funded projects** – The planning, design and construction of projects financed independent of bonds has been paused.

- **Deferral of all non-essential purchases** – Vice Presidents will be monitoring expenditures in their divisions and evaluating their need and timing.
- **Restrictions on all university-sponsored and/or coordinated travel.** Planning and funding support of faculty and staff travel will be suspended. Exceptions will be reviewed by vice presidents of units where special consideration for a waiver will be required.

In these trying times, our will and character have been tested. I am so proud that as a community we have responded resoundingly and compassionately. Let us recommit ourselves to working together, thinking innovatively and acting strategically in the best interest of the university we love.

We are a resilient community and we will recover from this difficult period. When we do, we will be stronger and better. We are OU.

In appreciation,

Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President