

PRESIDENT PESCOVITZ'S REMARKS

- Thank you. It's good to be "virtually" with you.

- As you may know, I am a lifelong member of Hadassah and former student at Hadassah Medical School.

- I thought it would be appropriate to reflect on the similarities between Hadassah and Oakland University — specifically, our shared commitment to community and service to others.

- Service to others is a principal that is at the center of my life and my heritage. In their beliefs and deeds throughout their lives, my parents dedicated themselves to serving others.

I'd like to think I am carrying on a family tradition, and a tradition deeply rooted in Hebrew social philosophy.

A guiding principle in my life has been 'tikkun olam,' the Hebrew phrase that means to "repair the world."

To live according to this principle means that we do everything we can to improve the lives of others.

This sentiment was at the heart of Henrietta Szold establishing Hadassah as a service organization more than 100 years ago.

- When I began my tenure as Oakland University President, I moved to broaden the mission to include diversity, equity and inclusion, and a more expansive commitment to community engagement – our way of doing our part to “repair the world.”

Today, at Oakland University, community engagement and service to others is at the core of who we are and a central tenet of our values.

Our goal is to be a leader in working to serve the needs and support the aspirations of our communities.

While we have a way to go, I believe we are on the right track, and making impressive, measurable progress.

- Henrietta Szold famously said: “Dare to dream, and when you dream, dream big.”

That quote reflects the similarities between Hadassah philosophy and Oakland University's community engagement mission that poses a personal and moral challenge.

- I'm proud to say there are many examples of OU students, faculty and staff meeting the challenge to dream, dream big and have their dream make an impact on the communities we serve.
- A case in point is the exchange program between OUWB and the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School.

The program was OUWB's first affiliation agreement, and until recently, overseen by Rachel Yoskowitz, a member of Hadassah and a retired OUWB retired faculty member, who many of you know.

Two medical students travel to Michigan from Jerusalem for two months every October, while up to five OUWB students travel to Jerusalem each year.

Students receive clinical learning in a foreign health care system and in a different culture.

The common experience is caring for patients.

- Another engagement opportunity closer to home is the OUWB-Hispanic Newcomer Outreach Mentoring Program, which is a collaborative effort between OUWB and Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, which is based in Pontiac.

Since 2016, OUWB students have spent more than 3,500 hours mentoring local Hispanic youth.

More than 30 medical student mentors already are signed up for next year — a true reflection of the impact of the program.

- Going into the sixth year, the OU-Pontiac Initiative supports the city of Pontiac in many ways while providing experiential learning for our students.

Overall, the focus is on civic engagement, health care and wellness, arts and culture, capacity for non-profits and neighborhoods, economic and workforce development, and education.

Our partnership with the city of Pontiac is another reminder that community partnerships require commitment, shared understanding and dedication to the principle that progress must include everyone.

- For example, the OU-Pontiac Pre-Kindergarten through 16 Education supports school programs, while helping parents and families become involved partners in their children's education.
- Most recently, OU students worked with the district to offer online tutoring and mentoring services to K-12 Pontiac children. We helped to bridge technology gap by providing Chromebooks to young people and study packets to students to help with at-home school costs.
- While we have established a range of community engagement programs, I want to take a few moments to discuss those challenges that come up suddenly, those challenges that require an immediate response.
- Today, we live amid a pandemic and great social and economic uncertainty.

A true measure of a person's, institution's and society's commitment to being engaged and serving is determined by their purposeful actions during uncertain times... times when it might be easier and safer not to be engaged.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has caused great harm and suffering. But there's a silver lining. The altruistic response by many, many people across the country and

here at OU is an inspiring example of compassion at work. And personally, gives me great hope for the future.

Those at OU involved in The Engagement And Mobilization (TEAM) are working selflessly with state, county and local agencies

The OU TEAM supports the delivery of services to those in need of health care, food, housing, daycare and social support, among other imminent needs.

The OU TEAM is a remarkable example of caring people coming together for a cause and having an impact, an example that would make Henrietta Szold proud.

- When we asked ourselves how we could support healthcare workers and health systems, we offered 750 rooms in our residence halls so frontline healthcare workers could stay, so they did not have to go home and put their own families at risk.

The rooms were filled with Beaumont employees, Auburn Hills Police and Fire first responders.

- Further, on short notice, we cleared out the Oakland Center (our student union) and made it into a vital food

distribution center, where students, faculty and staff package meals distributed in Oakland County.

- Our Honors College students developed an amazing tutoring program. The medical students participated in clinical trials, and OUWB developed a state-of-the-art COVID course which has been replicated around the country.
- OU students proved their ingenuity in responding to the needs caused by the COVID crisis.
 - Our engineering students used OU's 3-D printers to make face shields.
 - Students in the School of Music, Theatre and Dance used the costume shop to make cloth face masks.
 - Almost every single department at OU participated in a unique way.
 - It has been an amazing and inspiring experience to see the campus come together in truly innovative ways.
- It's the role of higher education to make sure the public has a deep appreciation for the values that play a vital role in a civilized, tolerant, diverse and thriving society.

- At Oakland University, the Cis Maisel Center for Judaic Studies and Community Engagement builds a new level of understanding about Judaism, and is an invaluable contributor to the public discourse on how to build and sustain a peaceful world.
- Cis' vision, in her words, is for the center to:

“...demonstrate how the Jewish people have contributed to society and the world around them.”

The programs at the center are a purposeful step toward enhancing religious and cultural understanding among all people.

- We are so appreciative of Cis Maisel's generosity and her vision.
- If the course of my life and these past few months have taught me anything, it's that none of us get through life alone, and without needing the support from others.
- More than ever, we should heed the call of Henrietta Szold.

Dare to dream.

And when you dream, dream big.

And in that dream, make sure you include ways you can serve and repair what needs to be repaired in the world.

Thank you.