

# INSIGHT

Spring 2020

## Evolve

*Graduate programs  
transform careers*

## Explore

*Faculty examine  
business trends*

## Emerge

*Alumni lead  
transformations*

# ACCOMPLISH

*Completion Scholarships*

HELP STUDENTS FINISH STRONG

**50**  
1969-2019  
CELEBRATING  
YEARS

**50**  
1969-2019  
CELEBRATING  
YEARS

SCHOOL OF  
**BUSINESS**  
ADMINISTRATION

As a responsible global citizen, the School of Business Administration has rescheduled its 50th Golden Gala and Celebratory Brunch from spring 2020 to fall 2020. We look forward to celebrating with you then.



HONORING OUR PAST ◆ CELEBRATING OUR PRESENT ◆ CREATING OUR FUTURE

Join us as we commemorate the golden anniversary of the Oakland University School of Business Administration.

# 50th Golden Gala

CELEBRATION

*Presented by The Elliott Foundation*  
**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2020**

Royal Park Hotel  
600 E. University Drive  
Rochester, MI 48307

*Join us as we commemorate the golden anniversary of the Oakland University School of Business Administration. We will honor the school's rich history and celebrate its vibrant future as we welcome you and your guests to a special evening.*

Black tie Optional

Please RSVP at [oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50](http://oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50)

\$150 per person; \$225 per couple

# Celebratory Brunch

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2020**

**11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

Founders Ballroom, Oakland Center  
on the campus of Oakland University  
Rochester, Michigan 48309

All are welcome to join us for brunch as we continue to celebrate the OU School of Business Administration's golden anniversary. Come share your experiences, connect with alumni and students and be part of our future.

Please RSVP at [oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50](http://oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50)

\$15 per person



TYLER TERPENING defines determination. Always preparing for the next challenge, Tyler is earning a Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics to complement his supply chain management experience in the U.S. Navy and excel as a supply chain analyst at General Motors.

# STRENGTHEN YOUR SKILLS

## GRADUATE BUSINESS CERTIFICATES

Boost your business acumen, refresh your skills and enhance your professional experience with a graduate business certificate. These 15-credit hour programs are ideal for working professionals seeking a fresh perspective or new skills. Learn concepts you can apply immediately while building a foundation for a strong future.

### PROGRAMS

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### LEARN MORE

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



### Reputation

In its first half century, the OU School of Business Administration evolved from a small business program to a nationally-recognized, internationally-accredited business school. I'm proud to say that thanks to the work of its expert faculty members, dedicated staff and the success of its graduates, the school has experienced tremendous growth in its reputation in the region as well as in the extended business, research and academic communities.

Our commitment to helping students excel and meet the challenges of tomorrow is one reason why our school and our graduates thrive in their chosen fields. Oakland business graduates launch highly successful, rewarding careers in a competitive global environment in corporations, non-profits, the community and in entrepreneurial ventures in Michigan and around the world.

The articles in this issue offer excellent examples how our innovative programs influence the success of Oakland business students on their journey from classroom to career. ➤

**Michael A. Mazzeo, Ph.D.**  
 Dean and Professor of Finance  
 Oakland School of Business Administration



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## INSIDE INSIGHT



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## COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIP ASSISTS FIRST-GEN STUDENT TO GRADUATE DEBT-FREE

By Rene Wisely

Matt Guarashio, ACC '19, understood the value of a dollar before setting foot in an accounting classroom.

As a first-generation college student, he knew he would be paying for college himself. That is why Guarashio carefully evaluated every university that accepted him. After reviewing the merit scholarship package OU offered and studying the opportunities OU provides its students and alumni, the Clinton Township, Michigan, resident committed to a Golden Grizzly future.

Guarashio graduated — debt free — in December 2019, with a full-time offer to join PwC as an assurance associate this fall. As a student, he put his public accounting skills to work as an intern at PwC and his corporate accounting skills in a co-op position at DTE Energy.

Scholarships were pivotal to his success, he says, particularly the ones he received from the business school near graduation. Taking a semester off to complete his PwC internship pushed back his graduation date beyond four years. The scholarship package he received his freshman year had ended, so he scrambled to find and apply for more scholarships.

“When I started as a freshman, I had a Monday through Friday job. It was difficult balancing everything,” he says. He did not want to return to that schedule to fund his final term. While he had some money saved, he says, “It would have wiped me out.”

### COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIP

Guarashio applied for and won a Crestmark Bank scholarship, which was established with the Oakland University business school in 2016 to mark the bank’s 20th anniversary and to assist students with financial need who are pursuing a career in business.

“I woke up my mom in the middle of the night when I learned I won it,” he says. “She was happy for me.”

This completion scholarship is one of many ways OU helped him succeed, Guarashio says. The additional financial support allowed him time to participate in Beta Alpha Psi (BAP), the honorary accounting fraternity, where he served as treasurer. In that role, he often worked with Donna Free, the faculty director of OU’s accounting program, whom he calls his most influential instructor at OU.

“Matt organized funding for our many activities,” Free says. “He is extremely reliable and accurate and will definitely make OU proud as an alum in the accounting profession.”

The scholarships opened many doors. Guarashio took advantage of the flexibility to enhance his business education with co- and extra-curricular experiences. In addition to BAP, he was involved in the Oakland Accounting Students Information Society (OASIS), Business Ambassador program and Leadership OU. As a Business Ambassador, Guarashio practiced his leadership skills leading workshops and representing the business school at student and alumni events.

“If I would have attended a different university, I don’t think I would have had all these opportunities,” he says.

By working campus and career-related jobs, living at home and securing scholarships, Guarashio fully appreciates the opportunities that helped him to graduate debt free. ➤

*“For my last year I’m fortunate to receive help from this Oakland University scholarship.”*

Luis Carlos Hernandez-Colin

Robert Hall

Proud to be the first member of his family to graduate from an American university, Luis Carlos Hernandez-Colin appreciates the foundation an Oakland business education will provide for his future.

### Strong Finish

## BUSINESS COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIP AIDS GRADUATION GOAL

By Alice Rhein

Nine years ago, Luis Carlos Hernandez-Colin moved to Michigan with his parents and younger brother when his father transferred to the FCA Headquarters in Auburn Hills. Growing up in Salttillo, Mexico, Hernandez-Colin is proud to become the first member of his family to graduate from an American university.

“An Oakland University business degree is going to let me create a career for myself and have the future that I planned,” he says.

Even with a part-time restaurant job and parents able to partially help pay for school, the 22-year-old finance major knew he would need additional assistance to complete his degree.

After investigating scholarships available to OU business students, he decided to apply for one. He was thrilled to receive a business scholarship that would help him achieve his goal.

“Transferring to OU (from Oakland Community College), I received the Phi

Theta Kappa for two years. For my last year I’m fortunate to receive help from this Oakland University scholarship,” he says.

Without the business-completion scholarship, he says his part-time income would have been dedicated solely to paying for college. Instead, the scholarship afforded him the flexibility to pursue activities to improve his career path, gain valuable professional and networking skills, and ultimately keep him on his path to graduation.

“College success is measured by the amount of things you learn and the experiences you can get,” he says. He appreciates the opportunities he’s had to participate in Business Scholars, career fairs, recreational soccer and Student Program Board sponsored events.

As a member of the Business Scholars program, Hernandez-Colin represented OU twice at an international case competition at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Business Scholars gain leadership and professional competencies

while putting skills to practice in case competitions to solve real business challenges. In the competitions, Business Scholars team members work together to gather research, develop a strategy and present it to judges within a few hours.

A strong interest in data analysis and how it can affect a company or the wealth of any person drove Hernandez-Colin’s decision to focus on finance. “Finance gives me the option to focus on personal wealth, or to go into corporate finances and analyze statements to help the organization grow,” he says.

Dedicated faculty and staff round out the Oakland University business school experience for him. “We, as students, are very lucky that faculty is composed of experienced instructors,” he says. In fact, Hernandez-Colin believes that the greatest resources at OU are its dedicated professors and staff. ➤

*“If I would have attended a different university, I don’t think I would have had all these opportunities.”*

Matt Guarashio

Robert Hall

Scholarships opened the door to many opportunities for Matt Guarashio, allowing him the flexibility to take part in a wealth of experiential learning activities.

# CROSSING THE FINISH LINE: SUPPORT FOR COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIPS PROVE CRITICAL

Today's college students balance work, school and family commitments, and often bear the full financial responsibility in support of their education. Nationally, more than half the students who drop out of college cite problems juggling work and school. Another national study indicates that almost 15 percent of students who have completed 75 percent of their required courses leave college before earning their degree due to financial concerns.

"Too often, students exhaust their financial-aid allotment or run into financial burdens prior to completing their degree," says Kristen Cometto, director of philanthropy, Oakland University School of Business Administration. "Completion scholarships provide critical support to students in achieving their goal of graduation."

College completion scholarships offer just-in-time financial relief to help students cross the finish line to graduation.

That is why the Oakland University School of Business Administration is focused on securing funding to create completion scholarships to provide aid to students who have completed at least 92 credits and require financial support to complete their coursework.

Thanks to the generous commitments from the following supporters who stepped forward to seed endowed scholarships, the OU business school is on its way to creating a path for business students to break through that final financial barrier to complete their degree. ➤



Courtesy of the Hermanoffs

**Michael Hermanoff**  
Vice President, Hermanoff & Associates  
and  
**Sandy Hermanoff**  
CEO and President, Hermanoff Public Relations

Touched by a fellow student's own struggles to finish college, the Hermanoffs now provide a scholarship every year to a student at both Sandy's (Ohio State) and Michael's (University of Michigan) alma mater who cannot afford to finish their senior year. They extended that commitment to supporting completion scholarships through their contribution to the Oakland University Business Completion Scholarship Endowment, thus helping students closer to where they live and work to realize their dreams.



Courtesy of Mark Mendola

**Mark Mendola, ACC '86**  
Vice Chair and U.S. Managing Partner, PwC;  
Executive Member, OU School of Business  
Administration Board of Visitors

I have seen the benefits firsthand of individual's contributions to the OU School of Business Administration and the impact it has on students to set them up on the path to success. I chose to support an annual School of Business Administration scholarship as it is important to assist students who are motivated to complete their business degree, but lack the financial support to do so. Knowing the value of an Oakland University business degree in the market, it is important that alumni help others so they can enjoy the same experience as we did.



Courtesy of George Corona

**George Corona, MBA '85**  
Retired President and CEO, Kelly Services;  
Member, OU School of Business  
Administration Board of Visitors

I felt compelled to help OU business students achieve their goal to complete their education after learning the number of OU seniors in good academic standing who don't finish their degrees due to financial hardship. I'm impressed by the work the Oakland University business school is doing to provide scholarships to assist these students.

**Peggy Chiu**  
Computer Facilities Administrator, School of  
Business Administration, Oakland University

As a parent of two young adults, I learned that many of my children's classmates and friends are not able to complete their college degrees due to financial hardship. Despite working various part-time jobs, securing student loans, and balancing study and family obligations, completing the degree without any scholarship assistance may force them to drop out of college. Only about 25 percent of Michigan adults ages 25 to 64 have some college education, but no degree. I support the Completion Scholarship Endowment so OU business students can achieve their goals.

For more information on completion scholarships and ways to support, please contact Kristen Cometto, director of philanthropy, at [kcometto@oakland.edu](mailto:kcometto@oakland.edu) or (248) 370-2121.



Sarah Swarz



## Taking Charge BUSINESS ANALYTICS CERTIFICATE FUELS NEW CAREER DIRECTION

By Alice Rhein

An emerging interest in the intricacies of data combined with a desire to expand her skill set propelled Michelle (Micki) Rhen to Oakland's Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics.

An electronic filing manager and a settlement distribution analyst at a law firm, Rhen was already balancing a full load of professional and personal commitments when she began exploring ways to ensure her skill set remained current.

"While I have taken on many different roles at the firm during the past years, my favorite roles have always involved data. Whether I am cleaning and analyzing data provided by other firms or writing complex queries to fill electronic claim filings, I am happiest when I am at the computer manipulating data," says Rhen.

With law associates retiring and the firm downsizing, Rhen decided to focus on preparing for her next professional move instead of worrying about her long-term prospects at the law firm.

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As a working professional, Michelle (Micki) Rhen found the business analytics graduate certificate the perfect way to expand her skill set.

"Employers are looking for analysis, presentation, power Excel skills, VBA, R, Python and so much more," says Rhen, who began the 15-credit business analytics graduate certificate program in 2018. "Oakland's graduate certificate program delivers on the promise to expose you to what is hot in the market right now."

As a working professional, Rhen found the OU business school graduate certificate program was the perfect way for her to expand into new areas and gain exposure to the current software and languages used in the industry. Taking one course at a time in the evenings, Rhen maintained her full-time career while balancing her commitments to her husband, two sons and nearby parents.

The quality of courses is exceptional, Rhen says, adding all her instructors have practical and applied experience and are passionate about the material they present.

"Some classes were pretty intense, especially (Associate Professor) Mark Isken's Business Analytics, and Practical Computing for Data Analytics, but they were also my two favorite courses," says Rhen, who waited until her oldest son, Jacob, graduated from high school before

entering OU. By then, her younger son, Jackson, was in high school. As Rhen says now, "It's fun to commiserate with your 16-year-old about homework."

Admission to the Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics is selective, and OU required Rhen to take a refresher statistics class. She appreciates the requirement, since statistics is the foundation of the program. She says she was initially concerned about how her skills would hold up around traditional-aged college students.

"I found out I had nothing to worry about. I had so much fun collaborating with today's college students and have learned that a shared passion for common interests fuels an exciting learning environment," says Rhen, who plans to pursue a Masters in Science in Information Technology Management (MSITM) at OU after completing the certificate program. The credits she earned in OU's certificate program will apply toward the OU MSITM degree.

"I can't wait to see where the combination of the skill set that I have developed over the years, along with new tools to analyze and visualize data acquired through the business analytics certificate program, will take me next." 🐾



© Robert Hall

With the online MBA courses, Iryna Nykolayko HRM '17, HR generalist, TelNet Worldwide, remains focused on her MBA while starting a family and working full time.

## ONLINE MBA OFFERS SOLUTION TO BALANCE SCHOOL, WORK, FAMILY

By Alice Rhein

Whether working full time, traveling around the world or home with her family, Oakland University's online MBA courses mean Iryna Nykolayko has not missed a beat in pursuit of her MBA. With access to the same accredited curriculum and quality faculty, Nykolayko discovered a way to balance the complex demands of school, work and life.

Taking full advantage of the flexibility, Nykolayko participated in online classes when she traveled for work and pleasure. "I could study online at my own pace when I went home to Ukraine and when I visited Hawaii and Mexico," she says.

Starting the OU MBA program paid immediate dividends. "My manager saw I was motivated to progress in my career and promoted me after I enrolled," she says. "The courses have given me a full understanding of how all departments work, separately and together."

With the online courses, Nykolayko could remain focused on her MBA while starting a family and working full time. "Then, after

I had my baby, I could keep taking classes online," she says.

The convenient online courses coupled with dedicated advising supports busy professionals interested in advancing their career without interrupting their life. Expert-led classes, real-world practice

*"I could study online at my own pace when I went home to Ukraine and when I visited Hawaii and Mexico."*

and robust discussions with faculty and peers guide OU MBA students in developing the strategic business knowledge necessary to tackle challenges across functions.

Ample opportunity for interaction with faculty and among classmates enhances

the strong business curriculum. "The faculty is always very flexible and proactively checking in with students," Nykolayko says. Some hold weekly phone-in times for lectures or open discussions so students can ask questions of the professor and each other.

Students value this access to and open communication with faculty. Discussions are not limited to traditional class times, Nykolayko notes. On the discussion boards and in group assignments, students contribute throughout the week, which makes it easy to stay up to date, she explains.

It is this interactive online community where OU MBA students immerse themselves in learning anywhere or anytime that works for their schedule.

Since she did not have to choose between work, family and school, Nykolayko is on track to return to work armed with an Oakland University MBA, ready to leverage the lessons for her organization and her career. 🐾

# EMBA FOCUS ON INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP ENHANCES BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

By Susan Thwing



Lifelong learning is a proven factor for success. That's a philosophy the father-son duo of Mark and Nick Gust embraced when they simultaneously enrolled in Oakland University's Executive MBA (EMBA) program.

Mark, founder and CEO of Industrial Automation, an Auburn Hills-based OEM, says the appeal of taking classes with his son was two-fold. "The essential part of Oakland's Executive MBA is that it provides you with skills and knowledge you can put to work right away. We don't have to be finished with the program to walk away with new concepts to apply to our work to benefit our clients," Mark says. "Also, we're competitive and we like to do things together."

The EMBA is designed to support experienced and high-potential professionals in their quest to perfect

leadership skills and build executive understanding. Through this focus, Oakland University Executive MBA students cultivate the capability and confidence to lead in a dynamic global business environment. Professionals across the spectrum engage and learn alongside accomplished peers.

That's precisely the benefit Jeff Klei, president, Continental, and member of the Board of Visitors for the OU Business School, identified for the Gusts when he penned a recommendation for both.

The two of them decided to take this journey together," Klei says. "A young, very sharp, highly motivated engineer with a very experienced business owner who will bring a tremendous amount of real-world experience," he adds, reinforcing the advantages for the Gusts and Oakland University's Executive MBA program.

*"The essential part of Oakland's Executive MBA is that it provides you with skills and knowledge you can put to work right away."*

Mark Gust, Founder and CEO of Industrial Automation

Nick launched his career at Continental as an associate development engineer after graduating from the University of Michigan. Later, his father convinced him to join Industrial Automation where he now works as a program manager. His professional background combined with the advanced education he's gaining through OU's EMBA program is giving him a valuable vantage point while bringing business theories to life.

Guest lectures by industry executives reinforce key learnings and highlight the relevancy of the curriculum. "The different perspectives and network of presenters builds upon what we learn in class through their expertise and insight," Nick says.

Even though they are at different stages of their careers, both Gusts are leveraging their own work history and drawing on their unique knowledge base to further refine critical business capabilities while learning innovative leadership strategies.

"So much has changed since I began my career — not just in the obvious ways such as computers and how the work was physically done — but in the concepts and methods that we learn in class and apply to our business," says Mark.

For Nick, the Executive MBA serves as a foundation to build his executive acumen and grow professionally across the experience threshold. With a focus on core business competencies and executive leadership, the Oakland University EMBA is enhancing Nick's ability to keep moving forward with his career.

After seeing the immediate return on their investment, Mark has only accolades for the Oakland University Executive MBA program and is encouraging other members of the Industrial Automation staff to enroll.

The program's alternating weekend schedule, full-service student support and OU's central location rounds out the OU Executive MBA as the great choice for busy, full-time professionals. ➤

## ABOUT MARK

CEO and founder of Industrial Automation LLC

Bachelor's, Business Marketing, Ferris State University

Established in 1992, Industrial Automation services primarily OEM, Tier 1 and Tier 2 automotive companies. The company crafts effective assembly solutions, born from ingenuity, collaboration and transparency.

## ABOUT NICK

Program Manager, Industrial Automation LLC

Bachelor's, Industrial and Operational Engineering, University of Michigan

Certified in robotic vision and robotic arc welding by FANUC Robotics

Prior to joining Industrial Automation, Nick worked at Continental for five years as an engineer and intern.

## ABOUT THE Executive MBA AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Designed for working professionals in or aspiring to leadership roles, the Executive MBA at Oakland University boosts your career momentum while allowing you to maintain your life. With a laser focus on essential business concepts and global perspective combined with proven leadership courses, the rigorous curriculum includes topical issues, C-suite presentations and professional development components. The fully inclusive 21-month program meets Friday afternoons and Saturdays on alternate weekends.

Learn more at [oakland.edu/emba](http://oakland.edu/emba).

 Robert Hall

Father and son Mark and Nick Gust embrace lifelong learning philosophy by enrolling in Oakland's Executive MBA program together.



## CREATING CONNECTIONS

### EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

## LEADS TO BRIGHT FUTURE

By Rene Wisely

Dropping in at an OU Career Services resume-writing workshop led by Northwestern Mutual recruiters set Jason Rousseau on a path where he is poised to launch his career as a financial representative with the company following graduation.

Northwestern Mutual is a key Oakland University employer-partner. It is one of many organizations that regularly sends recruiters to visit campus to connect with potential interns and future employees through meet and greets, career fairs and other activities. At events like the resume-writing workshop, professionals counsel students on careers, help them with their soft skills and create a talent pipeline for their organization.

At this Career Fair prep session, Rousseau met with Elio Kollcinaku, a Northwestern Mutual financial representative and a college unit director, who mentors the firm's interns. Kollcinaku happened to be filling in for an ill colleague at that particular session. The meeting turned out to be mutually beneficial.

"I never heard of Northwestern Mutual until that point," says Rousseau, a senior. "My goal was to get an internship in personal finance, so as we were talking, I thought, 'this is exactly what I'm looking for.'"

After Kollcinaku learned more about Rousseau's background — including his previous internship at a marketing

company which involved some door-to-door sales — he took the resume back to the office and did something he rarely does: he talked up Rousseau as being a solid prospect for Northwestern Mutual's 2019 summer internship program.

"I knew right away he was a really good candidate and yes, it helped that he had a previous internship," says Kollcinaku, who became his mentor.

### SIZZLING SUMMER OF SUCCESS

Rousseau was one of 46 interns from across the country that Northwestern Mutual's Troy office hired that summer. Of all the interns, Rousseau is ranked in the top two for helping clients with their financial plans. Northwestern Mutual asked him to extend his internship for the entire year and has plans to offer him a full-time position after graduation, according to Sadie Grobbel, director of campus selection at Northwestern Mutual's Troy office.

"He has been a tremendous asset to our intern team," Grobbel says. "Other interns look to Rousseau as a leader, noticing his drive to excel, and that inspires them to do the same. He has a great vision for his future."

The caliber of students like Rousseau and the welcoming atmosphere on campus are among the reasons Grobbel declares OU as her favorite community partner.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

The close partnership between the OU School of Business Administration and Northwestern Mutual illustrates the mutually beneficial relationship. It also demonstrates the value Oakland business interns and employees deliver in return; and how the important relationships between Northwestern Mutual and the business school supports student success, notes Ian Caullay, director of employer relations, OU School of Business Career Services.

"For most students the ultimate goal is landing a good job upon graduation," Caullay says. "The employer relationships allow students to gain career-related experience while figuring out if a particular path or company culture is the right fit for them." Often these experiential learning opportunities open doors for future employment, like it did in Rousseau's case.

Rousseau agrees. "Internships are good for finding out if you love the major you're in and if you want a similar career," says Rousseau, who changed his major three times.

Today, he's completely confident he chose the right major thanks to his internship opportunities. He's excited for his future and is grateful that OU opened doors to help him along his journey.

"I have an ability to make an impact on people's lives and I'm ready to help them," he says. ☺

📷 Robert Hall

A connection at a resume-writing workshop led finance major Jason Rousseau to a prime internship and a promising career at Northwestern Mutual.

*The caliber of students like Jason Rousseau and the welcoming atmosphere on campus are among the reasons Sadie Grobbel, director of campus selection at Northwestern Mutual's Troy office, declares OU as her favorite community partner.*

## INVESTIGATING TECHNOLOGY INNOVATIONS IN ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING

By Liz Lent

Emerging technologies are transforming the way the world lives, plays and works. Learning to embrace technology's transformative power is a must for organizations in every industry to succeed.

Robert Nehmer, Ph.D., professor of accounting and finance, has dedicated his research to examining the effects and applications of technology in accounting and auditing.

The technology revolutions in accounting and auditing are leading to less mechanical work for people in these areas and more creative work," Dr. Nehmer says. "More and more of the work is about broad decisions that affect business direction, how to formulate those decisions, and find and process the data that supports those decision making models.

Dr. Nehmer holds a lifelong interest in technology, specifically computing machinery. Growing up, his family would often gift him with various types of mechanical calculators and abacuses.

I even had a DigiComp, a mechanical computer," he says. "This was all before electronic calculators became available.

He cultivated that interest through college and graduate school, focusing his dissertation on translating the double entry bookkeeping system into an algebra and then into first order logic.

Two decades ago, Dr. Nehmer began considering how to incorporate industry interests into his academic research. Today, for example, he is investigating how apps are freeing business professionals and small-business owners from mechanized work, allowing them to focus on growth and innovation instead.

The apps do the bookkeeping for you, classifying the transactions using business friendly words and concepts," Dr. Nehmer says. "The small start up is freed from having to learn about accounting. It can go directly into business, yet still be able to conform to all the regulations such as paying payroll and income tax.

On the auditing front, "we are seeing a revolution using technology for continuous auditing and monitoring, starting in internal auditing," he says. "The audit process is undergoing a re-engineering whereby the more structured parts of the audit are pulled out from the less structured parts. The structured processes are then automated leaving the humans to make the harder and more judgmental decisions in the audit. For the average corporation, these advances mean better, more precise controls for lower costs.

The role drones could play in the auditing process is another area that intrigues Dr. Nehmer. "Our main question has been to what extent would the current auditing standards inhibit the use of drones," he says.

SEC audits, for example, have strict standards including requirements that auditors be physically present during inventory counting. We were interested in seeing where the current standards might impinge on drone use," Dr. Nehmer says.

For instance, if the auditor has to observe something, could it be done through a camera mounted on a drone? Would the auditor have to be physically present? Would he or she have to be flying the drone?" Dr. Nehmer and his colleagues conducted an extensive inventory of the effected audit standards, which "has helped the standard setters see what some of the issues are.

Blockchain has also piqued Dr. Nehmer's curiosity. Also known as distributed ledger technologies, blockchain is used in Bitcoin. It allows immutable ledgers of information to be kept. Industry is finding cost effective uses for these technologies in areas requiring an ability to provide data provenance and in security. "We did a project about auditing blockchains ... again emphasizing what the current standards are and how the standards make such audits easier or more difficult.

Expanding his academic research endeavors into real-world application enhances the richness Dr. Nehmer gains from his studies. "I see the results and feel that I can use my research efforts to help in several related business fields and industries," he says. ▶

*"The technology revolutions in accounting and auditing are leading to less mechanical work for people in these areas and more creative work."*

Robert Nehmer, Ph.D.



© Robert Hall

Robert Nehmer, Ph.D., professor of accounting and finance, dedicates his research to examining the effects and applications of technology in accounting and auditing.

*"This helps us understand why millennial or boomer labels are meaningless. We need to understand each individual as a whole person."*

Gregory Thrasher, Ph.D.

## LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE LIFESPAN RESEARCH ADDRESSES BIAS AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

By Mary Gunderson-Switzer

Gregory Thrasher loves it when students tell him they haven't yet settled on a career.

"It's great to have a variety of experiences – that's how we find out what we hate and what we love," advises Dr. Thrasher, Ph.D., assistant professor in the School of Business Administration's Department of Management and Marketing.

A myriad of life lessons influenced his research and teaching interests.

"I owned a construction company in Alberta," he says. "I became very interested in why people do what they do and what motivates them." Earning his Ph.D. in industrial psychology fostered a deeper understanding of leadership.

"Successful leaders, whether in business or politics, are all able to rally people," he reflects. "We all carry unconscious biases about race, gender, age, education and job type. If we're unaware of these biases, it can lead to ineffective decision making. Effective leaders are able to critically evaluate others, while leaving their assumptions at the door."

Dr. Thrasher ensures his business students are practiced at analyzing today's plethora of information from all angles, withholding personal notions, which reduces stereotyping of people and situations. Many of today's college

students are victims of stereotyping – as the so-called millennial generation, they are frequently saddled with the most selfish or narcissistic generation label. A 2019 Princeton research study, using charitable donation data, found no evidence to support this label.

"Students in my classes participate in a semester-long data collection regarding their motivation levels," explains Dr. Thrasher. "The results are always extremely different among them. This helps us understand why millennial or boomer labels are meaningless. We need to understand each individual as a whole person."

This holistic, individualized approach ties into Dr. Thrasher's recently published research paper on aging in the workplace: "Getting Old at the Top: The role of agentic and communal orientations in the relationship between age and follower perceptions of leadership behaviors and outcomes."

"Researching aging at work is really about understanding diversity at work," Dr. Thrasher explains. "It's not about how to lead a young versus older person; it's about developing leadership skills that allow you to understand the individual needs of each employee."

Dr. Thrasher began investigating this topic as his father was retiring from a leadership position.

"It opened my eyes to this hugely ignored area of how leadership changes across the lifespan. We need to foster workplaces

that understand lifespan development and how to keep workers motivated and healthy across all stages of life," Dr. Thrasher says.

Dr. Thrasher's aging-at-work research highlights the efficacy of using the more tailored approach, offering employees a reasonable amount of autonomy to craft their own work roles. For instance, in some cases, aging leaders may wish to participate in well-defined mentorship programs; in other cases, the preference may be to receive necessary updated skills training, to stay relevant, confident and respected by coworkers.

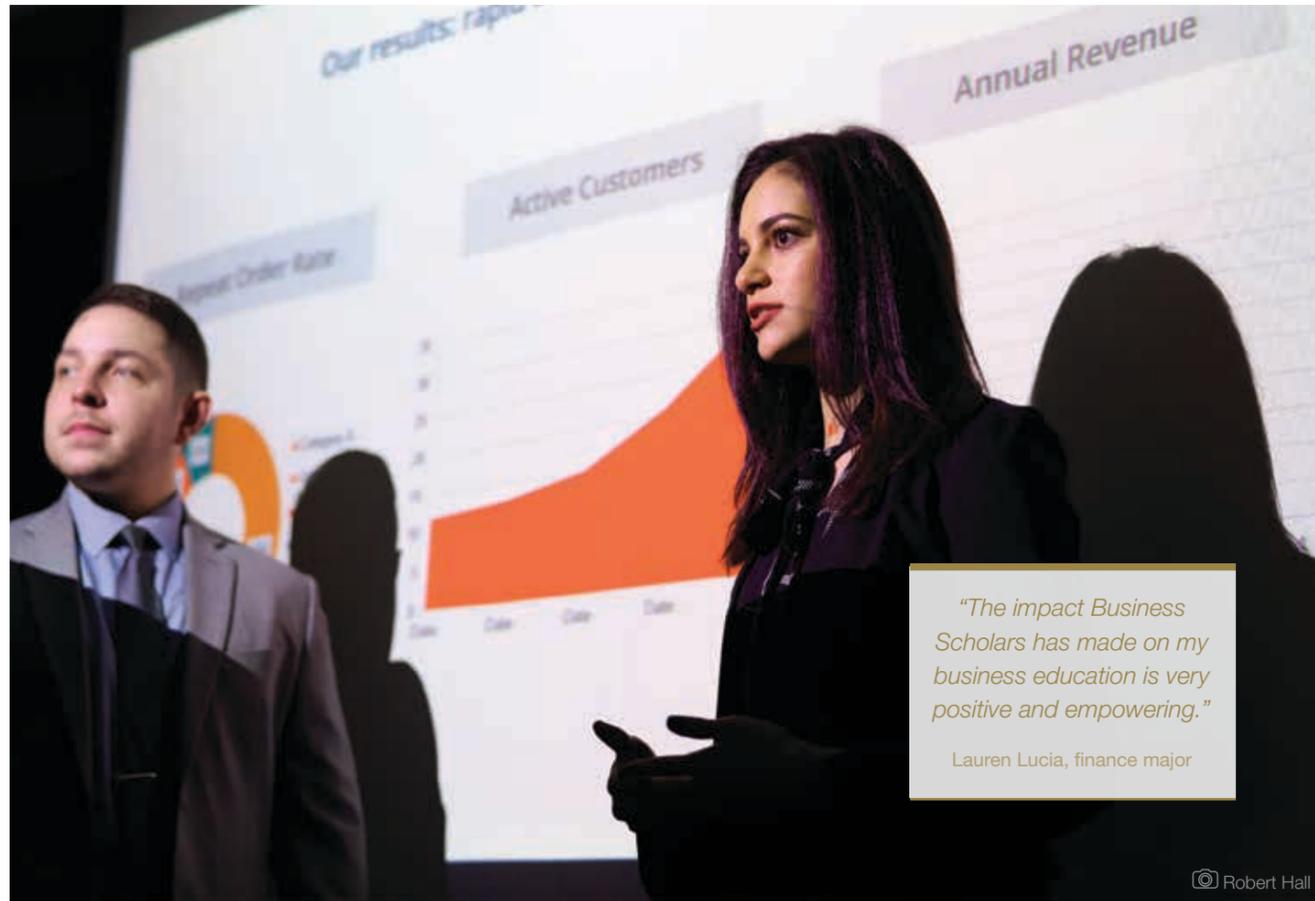
In a similar vein, Dr. Thrasher's recently published "Eldercare and the Psychology of Work Behavior in the 21st Century" research brings to light the importance of a work-life balance for employees. The research focuses on employees who juggle a caregiver role with elderly parents and, sometimes, children still living at home.

"Work-life conflict can be very broad in nature," says Dr. Thrasher. "Whether it's eldercare, childcare or for physical and mental health reasons, people need to be trusted by their employers to balance their own work lives. While domain specific programs are great (i.e., paid leave for eldercare), programs such as flexible work arrangements allow people to most effectively address their specific needs."

Dr. Thrasher continues to push research efforts forward, enthusiastic about tackling tricky issues related to the psychology of leadership. ➤

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Management Professor Dr. Gregory Thrasher studies the psychology of leadership, diversity and work-life balance.



*"The impact Business Scholars has made on my business education is very positive and empowering."*  
 Lauren Lucia, finance major

© Robert Hall

master professional competencies and build a strong network.

OU Business Scholars put their knowledge, experience and skills to work in case competitions sponsored by local organizations. In the three-hour competitions, the Business Scholars work in small teams to examine the case, then develop and present a business plan to a panel of judges. Over the years, Business Scholars teams have represented OU at various national and international case competitions, often outperforming competitors from around the world.

"The case competitions strengthened my skills and the experience led me to be more of a critical thinker and strategic when making decisions," says Lauren

Lucia, finance major. "The impact Business Scholars has made on my business education is very positive and empowering."

Judges are consistently impressed with the performance of the OU Business Scholars teams.

Business Scholars supporters and OU business alumni Michael and Susan Novak see the value the program brings to OU business students. "The Scholars program gives OU business students an opportunity to grow and develop their problem-solving and leadership skills as a team," the Novak's say. "These skills are more important than ever in today's environment and we are happy to support the program." ➤

The 2019-20 Oakland Business Scholars Case Competitions are generously sponsored by:  
**Oakland University Credit Union**  
**Michael and Susan Novak**  
**New World Diamonds**

© Robert Hall  
 William Gross, FIN '14, describes his Business Scholars experience as life changing.



## BUSINESS SCHOLARS PUSH BOUNDARIES TO MASTER PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

Building competence in business and professional skills leads to well-earned career confidence for Oakland Business Scholars. By collaborating with peers in dynamic team exercises, meeting with mentors and traveling to competitions, Business Scholars enhance their undergraduate business education with empowering experiences that prepare them for the future.

Piloted in 2007 as one of the business school's first co-curricular experiential learning programs, Business Scholars focused on offering students a wide range of opportunities including leadership, academic, research and global. As the Business Scholars program deepened its focus on leadership development through real-world interactions, other components of the original concept were integrated

into the curriculum or spun off as stand-alone programs.

As a founding member of OU Business Scholars, Chris Valmossoi FIN '09, head of global treasury for automotive supplier, NEAPCO, reflects how his involvement in the business school's experiential programs like Business Scholars, Beta Gamma Sigma and student organizations helped launch him into the business world. He points to his OU business education and experiences as driving his success.

"Answering questions on the fly when the dean is curious about a presentation is not that different than answering to the CFO or CEO in the boardroom," he says. "All of my time at Oakland University gave me a good foundation that allowed me to get where I am at today."

When Business Scholars relaunched in 2013, William Gross, FIN '14, CEO and co-founder, 17th Street Advisors, was among the first to join, adding it to the suite of life-changing opportunities he took advantage of as a student.

As a Business Scholar, Gross was matched with a local business executive mentor. "Having a mentor changed my life. It made me more focused, more driven. Business Scholars was very rigorous. As a sophomore, I was the youngest one there. We had to work on case studies, come up with solutions and then present our ideas to judges."

Leadership development, case competitions, community service and mentor relationships are the components that help today's Business Scholars

## IMPACT THAT LASTS A CHARITABLE BEQUEST



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*"For places like NASA, 'oops' is an expensive word. We need to correct product mistakes in the digital world."*

Michael Grieves

## BACK-TO-THE-FUTURE CONCEPT SPURS PRODUCT LIFECYCLE REVOLUTION

By Mary Gunderson-Switzer

 Amanda Stratford

A world-renowned authority in PLM, MBA alumnus Michael Grieves, Ph.D., is also Research Professor and Chief Scientist for Florida Institute of Technology's Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Innovative Design.

For some, managing a Fortune 100 company's mainframe operations in their early 20's might be the pinnacle of their career. For Michael Grieves, it was just the beginning.

Attending Oakland University's summer math camp as a high-school junior jump-started a career now replete with accomplishments for this alumnus, who graduated from OU's charter MBA program in 1979.

"At camp, we learned to program Fortran on OU's mainframe, which led to a path in the computer industry," says Dr. Grieves, who also has a bachelor's degree in computer engineering and a doctorate in executive management in business. "With that technical experience and later MBA equipping me with business tools, OU was instrumental in determining my future."

Now research professor and chief scientist for Florida Institute of Technology's Center for Advanced Manufacturing and

Innovative Design, Dr. Grieves is a world-renowned authority in product lifecycle management (PLM). He writes and lectures extensively on the topic and is a frequent keynote speaker. He's also a consultant for many leading international manufacturers and government organizations, including NASA.

PLM's focus is in maintaining information about a product throughout its entire lifecycle — design-build-maintain-dispose — reducing time, energy and cost.

"Once engineers develop a product, they often don't know what happens to it after that," says Dr. Grieves. "PLM is a back-to-the-future approach, like in the days of the cobbler. Cobblers knew their customers well and were physically involved, working and reworking their product, while keeping precise records — keeping customers satisfied, while reducing waste [the cobbler's time/energy/supplies]."

But how can beginning-to-end attention to a product be accomplished in the complex, modern era of engineering and manufacturing? The technically gifted, business-minded Dr. Grieves came up with an idea, ushering in an exciting revolution: digital twins.

### DOUBLING UP

Dr. Grieves first introduced the digital twin concept and model for designing, testing, manufacturing and supporting the product in the virtual world in 2002. Although virtual models have been around for decades, the digital twin required advancements in machine-to-machine communication and automation technologies. Technology has now caught up with the concept, allowing industries such as automotive, aerospace and healthcare to reap benefits.

A digital twin is a form and function model of the actual product, which incorporates

its 3D geometry, mechanical properties, electrical and electronic systems and simulated performance data. The real-world product's data interacts with and updates the model in real time, allowing for product problems to be spotted early.

"For places like NASA, 'oops' is an expensive word," Dr. Grieves says. "We need to correct product mistakes in the digital world, not the physical world. In terms of healthcare, extensive simulation work before actual patient care is another obvious, important benefit."

In addition to the safety, cost and quality efficiencies, Dr. Grieves points to exciting possibilities in expanding the use of digital twins in intelligent design predictor mode.

"With the [2009] Air France Flight 477 crash, the pilots continued performing the same [incorrect] action over and over," says Dr. Grieves. "With a digital twin to

show what would happen 30 minutes later in flight, they might have been able to correct their course. Another area where predictors could have life-saving consequences is surgery."

In collaboration with NASA Principal Technologist John Vickers, Dr. Grieves moves forward with research as executive director of the Digital Twin Institute — but he still looks back.

He remains invested in the university that provided his first computer-related opportunity and the business principles to last a lifetime. Dr. Grieves serves as Chairman Emeritus of OU's School of Business Board of Visitors. He and his wife, Diane (MGT '83), support a computer lab in Elliott Hall and an MIS business diversity scholarship.

"I realized early on I wanted to use virtuality to do valuable things," he reflects.

Mission accomplished — and continued. 

Business Briefs

SCHOOL NEWS

PRINCETON REVIEW RECOGNIZES OU MBA PROGRAM AMONG BEST



The Oakland University MBA program is among the nation's best, according to The Princeton Review. For the fifth year in a row, The Princeton Review has featured the OU Business School on its highly regarded Best Business Schools list.

The Princeton Review tallied its lists for 2020 based on data from the company's surveys of more than 26,700 students enrolled in MBA programs at 358 schools, and of administrators at those schools.

"We commend these schools for their outstanding MBA programs, each of which has stellar academic offerings as well as on-campus and off-campus experiential components," says Rob Franek, The Princeton Review's editor in chief. "We compile many categories of ranking lists rather than a single, hierarchical list because our goal is to help applicants identify, gain admission to, and succeed at the business schools best for them."

"National recognition of our programs reinforces the high-quality education OU business students gain from expert faculty and top-notch curriculum. Our program integrates theory, research and experience with solid academic preparation and practical skills that help our students launch successful careers," says Michael A. Mazzeo, dean and professor of Finance at Oakland's School of Business Administration.

BUSINESS PROFESSOR APPOINTED DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

Vijayan Sugumaran, Ph.D., department chair, decision information systems, and MIS professor, was appointed to the rank of Distinguished Professor by the OU Board of Trustees. Appointments to Distinguished Professorships are based on the candidate's efforts and accomplishments in the areas of teaching, intellectual contributions and service. The appointment recognizes Dr. Sugumaran's strong belief in education of the whole person and his dedication to preparing Oakland business students for successful careers. The nomination highlights his vast and scholarly contributions, commitment to student engagement in and out of the classroom, and his exceptional professional service at the national and international level.



BUSINESS SCHOLARS COMPETE

Working in small teams, Business Scholars developed business plans, recommendations and presentations to deliver to a panel of judges in a short time. In its first live case competition of the academic year, the "Risky Business" team took first place for its thorough analysis to increase return on advertising spending for competition sponsor New World Diamonds. In the second competition, Scholar teams focused on change management where the top team — "Business As Usual" — addressed falling morale and high employee turnover with a mission-based solution. The Scholars program is also sponsored by Michael and Susan Novak and the OU Credit Union.

OU Business Scholars Luis Hernandez-Colin, Jennifer Forgaciu, Lauren Lucia and Kenzie Weingartz proudly represented the School of Business at the prestigious Business Strategy Challenge at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business. The OU Scholars competed against student teams from all over the world in a weeklong competition to provide and propose strategic solutions for the global nonprofit CARE.



**100% ONLINE MBA**

The OU Business School is building on its successful online MBA courses by launching a fully online MBA program in Fall 2020. The program will be ideal for MBA students who do not hold a business undergraduate degree. Additional online courses will also offer current MBA students flexibility in registering for classes.

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EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

OU President Ora Pescovitz, MD, headlined the first Executive Lecture Series for Executive MBA students and alumni this academic year. In her remarks, Dr. Pescovitz focused on leadership team development and innovative approaches to problem-solving. This lecture series connects the EMBA program's innovative curriculum to real-world business challenges through the experience of established business leaders.



SUMMER CAMP IS ALL BUSINESS

For high school students interested in business, summer camps are an engaging and informative way to introduce them to the many aspects of the business world. While three separate weeklong business camps highlight different disciplines, each offers college campus experience, hands-on demonstrations, expert speakers, field trips and connections to the business community.

- A Glimpse into Being an Actuary, July 13 – 17, 2020**
  - Explore the World of Business, July 20 – 24, 2020**
  - Business Essentials, August 3 – 7, 2020**
- Learn more and register at [oakland.edu/business/summer-camps](http://oakland.edu/business/summer-camps)

STUDENT NEWS



PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Nicolas Giallombardo, a student in OU's Master of Accounting Program, is one of only 207 students in the country to receive a \$10,000 scholarship from the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB). The PCAOB Scholars program benefits outstanding students who are likely to become accountants and auditors. "I'm extremely excited about winning the scholarship," he says. "I'm paying my own way through school, so the additional \$10,000 from the PCAOB is a huge help. Now I'll be able to graduate nearly debt free."



DECA STATE COMPETITION

Congratulations to OU DECA members on their outstanding results at the Michigan Collegiate DECA State Career Development Conference. The OU DECA team dominated in its competition categories with four first place, four second place and four third place finishes as well as 14 finalist positions.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ENDEAVORS

Business Honors student Spencer Kelly was the focus of two feature stories highlighting child entrepreneurs. At 16 years old, Kelly launched his Expedition Soaps company, which has evolved into a family business. He was featured in the New York Times article "Mom, Can I stay up to prepare for my pitch?" in summer 2019. He and his younger brother, Grant, were interviewed in a recent CBS Detroit feature. As a high school student, Spencer was dual-enrolled at OU, he attended the OU Business Summer Camps and was involved in OU CARES.



Business Briefs

ALUMNI NEWS



FUTURE FOCUSED

MICPA honored Rebecca Stoutenger CPA, ACC '13/MAcc '14, finance coordinator, American Axle and Manufacturing, as the most recent recipient of its Emerging Leader Award. This award recognizes new professionals who are committed to the accounting profession and have stepped forward to share their perspectives, time and interest in helping others understand the value of becoming a CPA. Stoutenger is pictured above left with OU Women in Business mentee Shea Allor, operations management major.

The award release notes Stoutenger exudes enthusiasm for the accounting profession. Displaying a strong commitment to helping others understand the value of the CPA credential, she volunteers her time and expertise to educate students through classroom presentations and panel discussions along with her activities as a member of the Michigan Accountancy Foundation board of trustees, whose mission is to support continuing growth and excellence in accounting.

SWEET DREAMS

Following his dream led Tony Maassarani, MGT '11, to open two bakeries in Macomb County. Today, Bake My Day is known for its cheesecakes and has won Macomb Daily's Reader's Choice Best of the Best Bakery two years in a row. After graduating in 2011, Maassarani cultivated experience in the culinary field as an operations manager for Ameera Mediterranean Foods where he managed staff and operations while focusing on reducing waste and improving efficiencies. He leveraged that experience in his next role as business development manager Moulin D Or, one of the leading Arabic and French bakeries in Lebanon. He continued his work in that field as business development manager for Diagnos Techs and Interplexus.

**Save The Date**

# SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN DATA ANALYTICS SUMMIT

HARNESSING BIG DATA TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES

**Tuesday, October 13, 2020**

Oakland Center on the campus of Oakland University

The Data Analytics Summit is a half-day event that will include panel discussions from industry experts in automotive, finance, healthcare and defense. Hear the latest trends, best practices, and discover opportunities to collaborate with leading faculty researchers at Oakland University.

For more information about the agenda, speakers and sponsors, please contact Tara Bleck, corporate relations officer, at [tbeatty@oakland.edu](mailto:tbeatty@oakland.edu) or (248) 370-3515.

Hosted by Oakland University School of Business Administration

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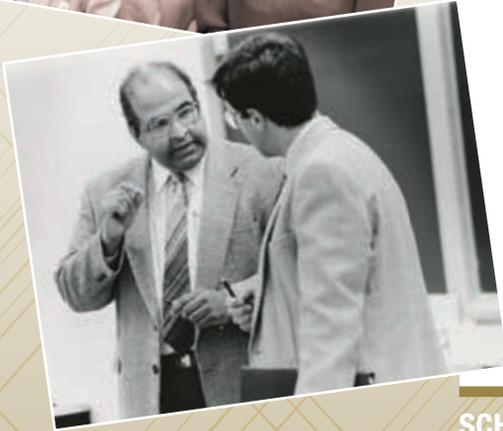


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### 50th *Golden Gala*

Friday, October 30, 2020

Royal Park Hotel, Rochester, MI

PRESENTED BY THE ELLIOTT FOUNDATION

### *Celebratory Brunch*

Saturday, October 31, 2020

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Founders Ballroom, Oakland Center

Event details, ticket and sponsorship information | [oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50](http://oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50)

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