

**International Women's Forum Dinner**  
**Wednesday, April 13**

## **President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz's Remarks**

- **Thank you, Carolyn.**
  
- **And thank you for your extraordinary leadership and friendship, which I cherish deeply.**
  
- **Welcome to Oakland University and Meadow Brook Hall, one of our most precious cultural jewels....and one of the many distinguishing features of our beautiful campus.**
  
- **In a few minutes, Madelyn Rzadkowolski, curator of Meadow Brook Hall, will give you an overview of one of America's greatest estate homes, an icon of the automotive aristocracy and home of the founders of Oakland University.**

**Madelyn will introduce you to a remarkable woman, Matilda Dodge Wilson, whose vision and passion for higher education is inspiring, and upon whose legacy we have built the path to Oakland University's promising future.**

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- **It's an honor to host the Michigan Chapter of the International Women's Forum, an organization that takes great pride in recognizing that to build a better world we must build better leaders...**
  - **...and what better place to start in building a better world than in building better women leaders.**
  
- **I look at the women gathered here -- leaders all of us – trailblazers, innovators.**
  - **Simply, this group gets it done – whatever the task, and however formidable the challenge.**
  
- **When I look around, I recognize accomplished, compassionate and wise leaders from business,**

**government, philanthropy, education, the arts and sciences.**

- **Leaders, by the way, who happen to be women.**
  
- **Being with such extraordinary women of such distinctive and diverse achievements gives me great encouragement and optimism about the future and what we can accomplish.**
  
- **Many of us here know intuitively that the fundamental ingredient of all successful leaders comes down to connecting and building relationships.... the kind of solid and healthy relationships that are at the heart of a strong organization, and the sustaining force of cultures and societies around the world.**
  
- **At Oakland University, we are extremely proud that more than half of our faculty are women... and that we are promoting women in the sciences (Society of Women Engineers) and supporting programs that mentor and foster leadership skills for our female employees (WERG).**

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- **Those of us in leadership positions have many responsibilities. But of all of our obligations, I would put “being true to yourself” and “being true to the values of your organization” at the top of the list.**
  
- **As many of you know, higher education faces many challenges.**
  
- **There is a decreasing pool of high school graduates. The cost of education is becoming too expensive for too many students. This comes at a time of increasing administrative costs, and the need for colleges and universities to be more entrepreneurial and innovative than at any other time in its history.**
  
- **Unfortunately, there is a growing skepticism about the value of a college degree. And, until recently, public funding for education has been stagnant, and in some cases, declining.**

- **Yet while there are many challenges in higher education, none are insurmountable.**
  
- **Whether you're a leader in the private or public sector -- in difficult times and thriving times – education offers the best hope for civility and progress, and values shape our decisions.**
  
- **At Oakland University, we placed health and safety as a top priority during the COVID-19 shutdown. As a result, we were among the first universities to mandate vaccinations for on-campus residents, and thankfully, we did not have a major outbreak of the virus on campus.**
  
- **In looking ahead, we are making strategic investment to make sure Oakland is always growing and developing to make sure students succeed and are prepared for success in their careers.**
  
- **It's why we're rebuilding South Foundation Hall, renovating Varner Hall, creating a first-class student**

**welcome center and developing an engineering research center.**

- **And, it's why we're firmly committed to doing all we can to make sure Oakland is a leading and model university in sustainability.**
  - **In fact, Oakland University and Oakland County have a formal partnership whereby our faculty is playing a vital role in the development of a county-wide sustainability plan.**
  
- **Again, it's an honor to host the International Women's Forum and for Oakland University to be connected with each of you as you work in your own unique leadership way to build a better world.**
  
- **Thank you.**