

## **Welcome Reception for Presidential Scholars**

Thursday, Feb. 10

- First, let me say that I am so pleased to meet and get to know each of you. You are more than Presidential Scholars here at the Honors College. You represent the finest qualities of student scholars, which means you are setting an example in the classroom and on campus.
- I want to acknowledge Oakland's Honors College Dean Graeme Harper for creating such a welcoming, warm and inspiring environment for our Presidential Scholars.
  - As you get to know Dean Harper, you will learn that he is among your greatest advocates and supporters, and a person of high integrity who is interested in making sure you have what you need to succeed academically...
  - ...and Dean Harper is always here to help you understand what you will need to succeed beyond OU as you distinguish yourselves in your careers as exceptional leaders.

- Two years ago, I stood before the incoming Presidential Scholars and welcomed them to Oakland University.
- At the time, there was growing concern about the public health threat from Covid-19. A month later, as Covid cases increased rapidly, we made the decision to close campus and offer classes exclusively online.
  - Since then, the “college experience” has changed fundamentally.
- These past two years have not been what we expected.
- Last year’s Presidential Scholars Reception was held virtually.
  - Getting to know students came after we made sure students could be safe and healthy on campus.
- Today, we are, once again, in-person and there can be no doubt that we are living in a dramatically changed world.
- The lesson of the past two years is clear: We can make plans, but we must always be prepared when life throws us an unexpected curve.
  - Each of you has not only distinguished yourself academically, you have proven to have the grit and

determination when things don't go according to plan.

- I speak for the Oakland community, when I say, "We applaud you for your persistence and dedication, and we are here for you."
- As our top-tier students, you are part of a tradition that began more than 60 years ago when Alfred and Matilda Dodge Wilson founded the University.
  - Their vision was to inspire students and leaders like yourselves to rise to their fullest potential.
    - Imagine what will your life look like when you reach your potential?
    - What kind of opportunities will come your way?
    - How will you be able to serve your community?
    - How will you make the world a better place?

- In many ways, you chose Oakland as much as we chose you. And...we are partners in shaping your future.
- Oakland provides a college experience where you are not a number, but an individual who is appreciated and respected for your uniqueness....your talents... and your dreams.
- At Oakland, you are part of a community that takes pride in making sure you succeed in a diverse and inspiring environment.
- There is no question that you have taken the first, and most important step, in making your dreams come true.
- Along the way, you will have constant companions on your journey.
- The mascot joining you on your journey is a very friendly bear, so special he is gold – a Golden Grizzly.
- You'll find you are in a community of friendly Golden Grizzlies.
- Think of your new home as an expansive den where professors, faculty, administrative staff are all here for you, and dedicated to making sure you have the support you need to feel comfortable and succeed.

- During these days of the pandemic, you might wonder if we will ever return to normal.
- Yes, we will.
- And we will get through this difficult time...together.
- Know this: You are at Oakland University, a campus community that considers your success our highest responsibility....
- You are at the right place at the right time.