

1 – 2 p.m. Friday, November 13

EVENT: [Virtual Leadership in Medicine: Career Path Options with Ora Pescovitz](#)

Healthcare Economics Interest Group

President Pescovitz's Remarks

- **Thank you, Kevin, and thank you to the Healthcare Economics Interest Group at OUWB for the invitation to be with you today.**

- **On behalf of Oakland University, I want to take a moment to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the many physicians and healthcare workers who, day after day, demonstrate their commitment to providing excellent care.**

- **The paramount importance of healthcare to assuring the quality of our personal, social and community life has been dramatically clear to the general public during the COVID-19 pandemic....**

- **And what is also clear is that the topic of health economics is especially timely.**

- **The systematic and rigorous examination of the problems we face in promoting personal and public health couldn't be more urgent.**
- **So, too, are the many uncertainties surrounding health coverage that must be considered to make sure health care is accessible and affordable for all people.**
- **Few other times in our nation's history has it been more important to coordinate public health policy.**
 - **Health economics plays a critical role in helping us to understand behavior of individuals, health-care providers, health-insurance decisions of organizations in the public and private sectors, and of course, the rationale of public health policymakers.**
- **Health Economics requires each of us to step outside of ourselves, and to look at health care from other and myriad perspectives.**

- **And I think that approach of looking at a situation from another perspective is an appropriate transition to discuss our topic today.**

< T R A N S I T I O N >

- **At early age, I fell in love with science and medicine.**
- **But, I had a conflict.**
- **Along with my love of science, I also had a deep passion for music. Initially, my plan was to be concert pianist.**
- **Early on, I understood how art and science are complementary in many ways. To excel in either field, you must make success your singular goal.**
 - **You must be studious, uncompromising in your pursuit, and you must be willing to sacrifice in order to be exclusively focused.**

- **Well, despite my devotion to Mozart and other great composers, I chose science.**
- **For me, there's something about the pursuit of knowledge, rigorous inquiry and discovery, and the notion of helping people that captured everything I wanted to be.**
- **Choosing between a life of scientific inquiry or a life in the performing arts, you could say, was my first existential experience along the path of figuring out who I am, and what I want to do.**
- **I earned my medical degree from Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, and conducted medical-research work on the physiologic and molecular mechanisms responsible for disorders of growth and puberty, and the development of novel therapies for these conditions.**
- **Subsequent to my pediatrics and research work, I moved into academic and hospital administration.**

- **At Indiana University, I served as executive associate Dean for Research at the school of medicine. And then, I moved on to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis where I served as President and CEO.**

- **From 2009-2014, I served as Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs and Health System CEO at the University of Michigan Health System, now known as Michigan Medicine.**
 - **I am very proud that I was the first female in that position – perhaps a small crack in the hospital administration glass ceiling.**

 - **Michigan, as we all know, is an incredible place. The system includes three hospitals, more than 120 health centers and clinics, and the University of Michigan Medical School.**

- **While at UM, my life changed profoundly.**

- **On a snowy night in 2010, my life was upended when my husband lost control of his car and was struck by a semitrailer and killed.**
- **My family lost so much that night, but in that tragedy was a lesson, a lesson about the fragility and fleeting nature of life.**
- **It's not a lesson that's unique to me.**
- **All of us have lost someone close to us. There is suffering and grief throughout the world.**
- **What I learned is that each person has to respond to the opportunity to build and rebuild their lives.**
- **And, I learned making a positive change, and making a difference requires a commitment – every day.**

- **After leaving Ann Arbor, I worked as senior VP for Eli Lilly biomedicines. During that time, I also served as president of the Society for Pediatric Research, the nation's largest pediatric research organization.**

- **And then, I landed here...at Oakland University.**
 - **Landed is the right word. I'm firmly planted here.**

- **Why did I choose to come to Oakland University? And, what continues to inspire me and has turned me into one of the university's most passionate advocates?**
 - **Three words: Promise. Opportunity. And community.**

- **From the time this place was conceived through today and considering the vision of tomorrow, Oakland University is committed to cultivating the full potential of a diverse and inclusive community.**

- **Everything we do is built on that promise.**
- **When I came here, I looked around and realized that this is a place where I can make a real difference.**
- **When I think about the path of my career, I realize you must have the following to succeed:**
 - **Aspirational goals and plan**
 - **The ability to be flexible and adaptable**
 - **A desire to seek a balance between personal and professional**
 - **An appreciation of mentorship**
 - **An understanding of the true meaning of happiness.... By the way, this is never to underestimated.**
- **I've been asked: How do you reconcile where you begin and where you are in your career?**

It's a good question.

- **Here's where I started:**

- **My goal was to have six children – yes, six – play piano semi-professionally and practice medicine part-time... yes, part-time.**

- **Here's where I am:**
 - **I have three children – and five wonderful grandchildren.**
 - **I don't play the piano. I do, however, occasionally dust off the grand piano at Sunset Terrace.**
 - **Just ask my staff... I have no clue what part-time means.**
 - **And, I am president of a university, and don't actively conduct research or practice medicine.**

- **A funny thing happened along the way from graduating medical school to today.... Life.**

- **Today, my experience as a physician, teacher, researcher, and hospital administrator informs my decisions as we navigate Oakland University through the ever-changing higher education**

landscape, and, of course, amid the unpredictability of the pandemic.

- **My many experiences have prepared me to this point of managing change – planned, unplanned and spontaneous.**

< Transition >

- **Today, we must be up to the task to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic downturn, impact from environmental disasters, social and racial injustices, and we must come up with a way to better fund K-12 and higher education.**
- **Real, lasting solutions of these and other challenges require leadership – innovative, bold and enlightened leadership.**
- **In his study of the laws of evolution, Charles Darwin concluded: “It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive, but those who can best manage change.”**

- **When it comes to managing change and effective leadership, I rely on the 8 C's:**
 - **A moral COMPASS**
 - **Compassion**
 - **Courage**
 - **Contribution**
 - **Commitment**
 - **Communication**
 - **Collaboration**
 - **Creativity**

- **In many ways, a career in patient care is not a choice, it's a calling.**
 - **It's who you are.**
 - **It's what you have to do.**

- **But in the broader sense, who you are and what you do has more to do with a need to express your humanity...to help people.**

- **Your specific job and responsibilities change over the course of your life and career as you become more experienced, and yes, more wise.**
- **If you listen close enough, you'll know when the sense of purpose is so clear and compelling that personal and professional change becomes inevitable.**
- **I've come to think of my professional metamorphosis from med student to researcher to hospital administrator to university president not as changing my career path, but rather building a broader road for the many possibilities of my life.**
- **I wish you well as you pursue the possibilities of your career and life.**
- **Thank you.**