

OU-Pontiac Initiative annual town hall meeting celebrates successes; new partnership with OCC

The year's triumphs reinforce the vision that 'Together We're Better'

The 2023 OU-Pontiac Initiative Town Hall Meeting was held on October 21 at Oakland University's Oakland Center as leaders and supporters gathered to celebrate accomplishments, set new goals and expand its network for even greater collaboration.

The highest honor from the past year came in June as the OU-Pontiac Initiative was recognized as a national community engagement model by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, earning the inaugural [AASCU Excellence & Innovation Award](#).

"We take great pride in this year's AASCU recognition for the OU-Pontiac Initiative," said Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz. "The initiative has been a dynamic partnership and catalyst for improving the city's education, public health, economy, workforce, neighborhoods, nonprofits and culture."

The other big news announced at this year's gather was that Oakland Community College (OCC) has joined as a partner to strengthen the education and workforce development pillars by expanding the initiative's learning and job training opportunities.

"We are all focused on the same outcome – a vibrant, healthy community and successful downtown area. We know there are many ways to get there, but we believe education and career-readiness is what makes this initiative sustainable," said OCC Chancellor Peter Provenzano. "Focusing on neighborhoods with equitable access to education, ensures individuals in the community have more employability and sustainable income for generations to come. This, in turn, improves utilization of the downtown area for entertainment, business and more. We are pleased to formalize this commitment."

"We value the OU-Pontiac Initiative and appreciate Oakland University's commitment to Pontiac," said City of Pontiac Mayor Tim Greimel. "We look forward to continuing to work together in all of the pillar focus areas to amplify the impact of the partnership on improving the day-to-day lives of our residents. We also appreciate Oakland Community College joining in the effort to strengthen our education and workforce development opportunities."

OU-Pontiac Initiative founding leader Tom Kimble, an OU honorary doctorate degree recipient added, "I am continually amazed at the results we can achieve together with so many caring people and groups investing in my beloved city of Pontiac. Their time, energy and generosity will never be taken for granted."

“When I reflect on our achievements this past year, I am inspired to pour even more of myself into this program because there is no doubt that we are making a difference for so many of our young men and women in Pontiac,” said Glenn McIntosh, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer at Oakland University. “I am so appreciative for the tireless work of everyone involved and thank each of these individuals and their organizations for their contributions.”

There are still many opportunities to get involved in community outreach and engagement for the OU-Pontiac Initiative. Those interested, can contact OU Senior Director of Pre-College Programs and Community Partnerships Teresa Rodges, a Pontiac High School, Oakland Community College and Oakland University graduate at (248) 370-3087 or by visiting oakland.edu/community/Pontiac-initiative.

Some of the OU-Pontiac Initiative pillar highlights for this past year include:

Arts and Culture

Held a successful Women in Jazz program in February

Hosted Tuesday’s Global Music Jam from January through April

Led an Art Education Service Learning Partnership during the year with Pontiac High School

Grew this year’s Pontiac Arts Crawl event to more than 5,000 participants

Education

Brought 1,088 students to OU via Pre-College Program for campus learning opportunities

Educated students by hosting Nursing and Health Sciences education and awareness programs for Pontiac students at OU

Hosted a Pontiac High School Athlete’s Lunch and Learn event with OU coaches and players

Enriched the minds of more than 1,000 area 5th grade students during the Clinton River Water Festival

Neighborhoods and nonprofits

Created five full scholarships for OU’s Nonprofit Management Certificate program for Pontiac nonprofit business employees

Developed the Nonprofit Capacity Building Survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 on Pontiac nonprofit groups

Engaged 860 college students to participate in various community service projects

Civic Engagement

Hosted a half dozen civic engagement programs such as Lessons from the Edmund Pettus Bridge Foot Soldiers Alice Moore and Denise Holt. They recounted their experiences as teenagers in the fight for voting rights.

Helped facilitate opportunities for Pontiac residents to attend the Juneteenth Freedom Day celebration.

Initiated conversations to rename Bagley Street in Pontiac as a historical site

Health Care and Wellness

Held an American Medical Association Back to School program to inspire children to consider careers in the medical field

Provided resources for Mental Health training and informational sessions

Conducted a Street Medicine clinic and health fair for some of Pontiac's most vulnerable residents

Facilitated a career day for Pontiac High School students at Trinity Health Oakland Hospital

Economic and Workforce development

Provided a college readiness course at OCC for Pontiac High School students to prepare for college courses, build time management skills and other skills to aid in their success when entering college

Designed short term, high-intensity training programs at OCC in partnership with Oakland County Michigan Works! to prepare students for careers in high paying careers

Worked with businesses and educators to offer skilled trade and manufacturing training

Twenty Pontiac businesses joined together to create this year's IAmPontiac paid summer internships for young adults to gain work experience and learn from business mentors.

OU-Pontiac VISION STATEMENT

A sustainable, mutually beneficial relationship between Oakland University and the City of Pontiac.

OU-Pontiac MISSION STATEMENT

The Oakland University-Pontiac Initiative (OU-PI) is advancing the vitality of Pontiac while enhancing experiential learning opportunities for Oakland University students. We promote civic engagement in the community. In addition, we call upon a broad network of individuals and organizations to achieve these goals by using appropriate infrastructure, human and financial resources.

- To be a catalyst for relationship building and collaborative projects involving groups from Pontiac and Oakland University
- To promote the university's research agenda with a focus on mutually beneficial projects that enhance both communities
- To enhance the curricular and co-curricular programs by connecting students with Pontiac-based opportunities for service learning, internships, volunteer experiences, recreation and arts
- To support the city's Economic Development Strategic Plan: Pontiac Moving Forward
- To connect Pontiac-based entities with OU faculty, students, programs and resources
- To facilitate consistent, accurate and timely communication between Pontiac and the university communities
- To identify and secure human and financial resources (including external grants) needed to ensure a sustainable model for community engagement