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To: [ProvostNotes](#)
Subject: Provost's Notes: 5/16/2022
Date: Monday, May 16, 2022 8:54:25 AM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

Good morning – and welcome to Finals Week Spring 2022!

Last week was a busy one for me, but wow – what a rewarding one. There were so many things to celebrate:

- We held our first Line Worker Rodeo on Tuesday at the OTC Lebanon Center. It was wildly successful and so much fun to watch. Even better: The next day, Marcia Wheeler was working Live Chat and received a message from an 8th grader who had attended the rodeo. He told Marcia that he was so inspired by what he experienced that he wants to begin planning now to attend OTC when he finishes high school. He asked Marcia for advice about what he can do now to make sure he is ready to attend.
- Tuesday evening, I attended the OTC Choir Spring Concert at Drury Stone Chapel. No surprise, it was absolutely beautiful. OTC Choir concerts always feel to me like a big, warm hug. Alberta Smith, our phenomenal choir director, never fails.
- On Wednesday, it was back to Lebanon for the Williams Scholarship award ceremony. Several OTC students who are transferring on to MSU to major in Elementary Education received a total of \$30,000 in scholarships. Bill and Janet Williams, the donors, were on hand to meet the recipients of their generosity.
- I received another “where-are-they-now” student update from Dana Sherman last week. Three former students who earned their associate of science in Chemistry from OTC are graduating from MSU with master’s degrees in Chemistry this week. Giselle Campos, Megan Westwood, and Dane Wagner are all now headed on to Ph.D programs: Giselle to the University of Minnesota at St. Paul, Megan to the University of Michigan, and Dane to Purdue. Dana shared one of Megan’s tweets: *“I heard many times that CHM 101 is just for students that need a science credit...but that course changed me into a chem major.”* Congratulations to that CHM 101 instructor, Dr. Ryan Shook, for helping this student find her passion. Check out those smiling faces:



- You've heard a lot about OTC's involvement with [rootEd Alliance](#), the organization devoted to improving rural postsecondary attainment. Dr. Abby Benz has been instrumental in that partnership and spent some time at a rootEd partner school, Hollister High School, last week. She ran across a student who is planning to attend OTC's 20-week welding program this fall. He told her that he had been about to drop out of high school and was a significant number of credits behind. However, he worked his way out of a tough spot and will graduate this week. He began asking Abby questions about next steps for admission, and she quickly realized she needed guidance. Matt Hudson and Danelle Maxwell to the rescue! As Abby said, *"They were both right there to help me walk the student through the process and next steps...it reminded me of all of the good things and people we have helping students!"* As a side note, Abby told me that the student's rootEd Advisor was the first person he told that he wanted to go to college. When she asked him why, he said he was afraid of people laughing at or making fun of him. This is another example of why building positive relationships with students is so important.

So as great as last week was, I'm eagerly looking ahead to another week of celebrating students: Middle College graduation, the High School Health Sciences Recognition Ceremony, and of course, the cherry on top, Commencement on Thursday. For many years, I've shared a portion of a blog written by Kristin O'Keefe of the *New York Times* because of how perfectly it describes a community college commencement:

Here's the thing about a community college commencement: It's not just joy-filled, it's triumphant. Because for many of the people proudly waving their diplomas, this day was far from a certainty.

Congratulations to our students, but also to all of you who contributed to what will be a triumphant celebration on Thursday. You did good.

This is my last *Provost's Notes* until August. I wish you all an enjoyable summer filled with plenty of things you love.

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