

WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

OU alum and instructor teaches importance of seizing opportunities

By Robert Guttersohn  Alex Godin



Melissa Curtis-Hendley, SEHS '05, is living proof that opportunities can come from anywhere. “I fell upon my career passion by complete chance,” she explains. After graduating from Oakland University in 2005 with a master’s degree in training and development, her career change came from two events.

First, was a frank conversation she had as a pre-law student with an attorney who told her the realities of being a lawyer — grueling hours, large school debt and low pay. She decided she wasn’t passionate enough to pursue a career in law.

The second event was being hired as a human resources administrator at a community bank. Although she had little training, she learned to create job aids and training manuals — and discovered she really enjoyed doing it. This practical, “learning-on-the-spot” job experience prompted her to change her OU master’s degree program of study to training and development.

“With all the theory I was introduced to in my graduate program, I found I was already doing it as an HR professional,” Curtis-Hendley says.

During her graduate studies at OU, she received hands-on experience with a Detroit nonprofit organization developing curriculum to teach children better sleeping practices.

She was also introduced to lean — a continuous improvement strategy to help organizations eliminate waste and design more efficient and effective work processes.

“Companies should always try to improve processes to increase revenue and make employees happier in what they do,” she says.

After earning her graduate degree, she accepted a position as the director of instructional design with a Novi-based training and consulting firm that provides continuous improvement services. For 12 years, she shaped strategies and initiatives for many organizations — from auto companies to luxury yacht manufacturers.

Last year, she became an independent consultant — forming MCH Consulting and Design LLC — allowing her a more flexible schedule as she prepares to pursue her doctorate at OU.

“I’d take great pride in achieving the triple crown from Oakland since this university has played such a critical role in shaping my career path,” she says.

Curtis-Hendley often shares her professional anecdotes with her students in the training and development courses she teaches at OU’s location at the Macomb University Center in Clinton Township.

“I tell my students it’s great to have a career plan, but you should always be open to emerging possibilities. I don’t know where I’d be today if I had closed off the idea to changing my education path,” she says.

She enjoys teaching at the University Center and has grown very fond of the staff and students.

“They’re so welcoming and enthusiastic to learning and engaging in the classroom. It’s not my home campus, but they all make me feel like it’s my home.” 

