

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate  
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson  
DATE: 3 April 2017  
RE: April Report

I apologize that a previous commitment off campus prevents my joining you for this month's meeting, but appreciate the chance to submit this monthly report nonetheless.

As part of the peer review process, I just returned from a reaffirmation visit to a campus in South Carolina as the presidential representative on a SACSCOC committee. Having just gone through the same process here at ECU, I would like to once again thank all those who helped with the successful completion of our own reaffirmation. This is no small task, and under the able direction of Dr. Sherry Robinson, the University came away with very high marks. We will get the final report from our own review committee in December at the SACSCOC Board meeting in Dallas but every indication we have received thus far is positive.

Thanks again to everyone who helped contribute to this most successful process and to our collective efforts toward continuous improvement at ECU.

### **Mock Trial Team**

None of their tournament wins have aired on national television, and certainly no one has burned a couch in celebration of one of their many victories – and for that, we are grateful! But, quietly, an ECU team has established a reputation as quite a national powerhouse.

For the third consecutive year and fifth time in seven years, our mock trial team is among only 48 teams nationwide to qualify for the American Mock Trial Association national championships, to be held this year in Los Angeles. A Colonel Cheer to the student competitors and to all the faculty and staff who assist with the program: Tom Parker, Lynnette Noblitt, Brandon Williams, Kristeena Johnson and Dean Sara Zeigler. And best wishes as they represent the University later this month.

### **Prestigious Internship**

A shout-out, also, to junior Dalton Stanley, who accepted a prestigious supply chain internship with Domino's regional office in northern Kentucky. It bears noting that, earlier this semester, this Pikeville native scored in the top 1 percent globally in the AACSB School of Business Field Test. We are, indeed, attracting more of Kentucky's best and brightest students, and they continue to succeed on the national stage.

### **On the faculty/academic program side, cheers to:**

- Foundation Professors Dr. Kelli Carmean, in the Department of Anthropology, Sociology and Social Work; and Dr. Kevin Minor, in the Department of Criminal Justice and Police Studies. This is our highest honor for teaching excellence, and these two winners of the 2017-19 award are richly deserving.
- Dr. Alice Jones, of our Department of Geosciences, who researched, wrote and will perform a one-woman play about the lives and contributions of two underappreciated scientist sisters from almost a century ago, Lucy and Annette

Braun. The curtain rises on “Sisters of the Mother Forest” on Wednesday, April 5, at 7 p.m. in Pearl Buchanan Theatre.

- Dr. Ginny Whitehouse, professor in our newly created multimedia news program in the Department of Communication, and our newest Fulbright Scholar. She will teach journalism in Bulgaria. Also, retired WEKU reporter/producer Ron Smith earned a Fulbright Scholarship to Pakistan.
- Sandy Martin, who was honored at our recent Championing Women’s Athletics luncheon. Every so often, we hear coaches lauded for winning titles at multiple schools. Coach Martin, who also taught in our physical education program, is the only coach in Ohio Valley Conference history to win Coach of the Year awards in three different sports: women’s golf, tennis and track and field/cross country. The keynote speaker at this year’s luncheon was Dr. M. Dianne Murphy, former ECU women’s basketball coach, who recently retired as the director of athletics at Columbia University after a very 11 year tenure in New York City.
- Our game design program, recently ranked 47<sup>th</sup> worldwide, up a few notches from a year ago, by The Princeton Review. Congratulations to Gaming Institute Director Dr. George Landon and other faculty for this amazing achievement, especially considering the relative newness of this rapidly growing program.
- Our Safety, Security and Emergency Management program, which has renewed its agreement with the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center to provide credit courses in the CP-12 safety program. A new wrinkle this year is that the 30 participants in the program are coming here for the seven weeks of training, as opposed to taking the courses at Fort Rucker in Alabama, thereby raising the profile of the University even further and boosting the local economy.

### **Scholars Week**

Much of the exemplary scholarship, research and creative endeavors of our students and faculty will be on display throughout our annual Scholars Week event, April 10-14.

This year, the week includes an added focus on faculty scholarship, with a University Fellows Showcase and a Faculty Division of the University Presentation Showcase.

I hope you can find time to join in this year’s celebration. You can see a full schedule of events at [ekuscholars.eku.edu](http://ekuscholars.eku.edu).

### **Miss Kentucky**

We talk a lot around here about what it means to be a Colonel.

It means a commitment to excellence and reaching great heights, often against steep odds. Sometimes it involves turning a negative into a positive through dogged endurance and sheer determination. Such is the case with ECU senior Stephanie Ramos.

Seven years ago, Stephanie became a victim of extreme cyber-bullying. Her self-esteem was shattered, and she dreaded leaving her house and going to school. Then, one day, she received a letter stating that she had been anonymously recommended for a local pageant. Though she had never given any thought

to such event, her decision to enter changed her life forever because it gave her a purpose, a platform to advocate for all others who've been victims of cyber-bullying.

A few weeks ago, the ECU senior captured the Miss Kentucky U.S. title and will go on to compete this summer in the Miss United States pageant, a precursor to the Miss Universe pageant.

Besides her ongoing work to counter cyber-bullying, Stephanie opened her own dance studio in Lancaster at age 21 and hopes one day to expand her business into a national chain that targets low-income communities, giving children who have not been exposed to the arts an opportunity to fulfill their dreams without regard to the cost. She also co-founded a Dare to Dream Pageant for children with special needs; the event covering all expenses for the entrants.

It was here at Eastern, Stephanie said, that she found her calling to help children.

It happens every day on our campus. As faculty and administrators, we see in a student, or maybe in a colleague, talents and possibilities that perhaps that person does not even see in herself or himself. We intervene. We encourage. We cajole. We write letters. Sometimes, we even inspire.

And, like that anonymous person whose letter turned Stephanie's life around, we typically do it far from the spotlight. We do it because that is what it means to be a Colonel.

## **Conclusion**

I was very pleased – working together with members of the Faculty Senate Budget Committee and Provost Janna Vice – that we were able to make long-overdue increases to faculty stipends for summer teaching. This was announced campus-wide a short while ago.

Some have inquired where we are relative to Phase III of our IPEP (Internal Pay Equity Program) and the implementation of this final phase. While we were able to budget phases I and II within the past 3 years, recent budget reductions have forced us to put the final implementation on hold for the time being. Our ECU Board of Regents is committed – as is my administration – to keeping our obligation to this final IPEP phase. However, we do not have the funding to do so at this time. As we continue to manage our budgets wisely and plan for the inevitability that is performance based funding, we must also grow our enrollments and increase revenues to the institution. This will enable us to invest resources in our people and in programs where the greatest growth potential lies.

Thank you for your continued service to ECU.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Benson