

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate  
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson  
DATE: 2 April 2015  
RE: April Senate Report

I apologize that I am unable to be with you in person this month for my report, but a previous commitment has he away from campus for a few days.

March 2014 will go down as a momentous month in the history of our University, with successive approvals by the Student Senate and Board of Regents of a student fee to fund a small portion of our proposed Center for Student Life (CSL).

The CSL is vital to our efforts to compete and even exceed expectations as we step up our efforts to recruit and retain not only the best and brightest students, but faculty and staff as well. It is the signature feature of our comprehensive renewal efforts as we re-envision the historic core of campus to become a bustling hub of campus activity and better serve the holistic needs of our students. The remaining components of the Center will be financed by a creative mix of public-private partnerships, private dollars and University funds.

Pending approval by the CPE at its April meeting, initial design work and project cost estimates for the Center for Student Life are expected to be completed by October. We anticipate the final agency bond amount will be submitted to the CPE and Finance Cabinet this December for inclusion in the 2016 budget request and will then seek General Assembly approval next year to begin construction on the project in the Summer of 2016.

My hope is that faculty, staff and students alike will continue to share their hopes and dreams in the weeks and months ahead. Out of that dialogue, a campus master plan that incorporates this revitalization will come into sharper focus. Our shared vision will ultimately lead us to become the clear-cut top choice for prospective students in our region and the envy of our peers nationwide. When that happens, we all win: not just our students, but faculty and staff as well.

Stay tuned: the best is yet to come.

Other important news from what was a very busy month:

#### **Assistant Vice President for Major and Planned Gifts Named**

Whether it's various campus revitalization initiatives or support for scholarships and academic programs, private support will play an increasingly important role moving forward.

That's why one recent personnel announcement was so critical. Ben Mohler is our new Assistant Vice President for Major and Planned Gifts in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations.

He brings 14 years experience in higher education advancement, including the past seven years as Director of Philanthropy and Development for the William States Lee College of Engineering at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. While there, he guided the College to record fund-raising totals, and I expect he'll have a significant impact on our efforts.

#### **Steve Lochmueller New Athletics Director**

Likewise, I expect our new Director of Athletics, Steve Lochmueller, to play a significant role in our ongoing efforts to raise private support and raise the national profile of the University.

He brings a unique skill set to the position, with the entrepreneurial vision, business savvy and proven leadership skills to guide our Athletics Program as he imbues our athletics operation with a business mindset focused on resource and revenue generation.

### **Dr. Siwei Gao Appointed Coffey Professor of Insurance Studies**

One of our most generous supporters through the years has been 1965 Eastern graduate Tom Coffey, who in 2004 established the University's first endowed professorship. Recently, he was on hand to recognize Dr. Siwei Gao's appointment as the Thomas and Rebecca Coffey Endowed Professor in Insurance Studies.

### **"Colonels at the Capitol" Event Big Hit with Lawmakers**

Equally critical to our future success is the support we enjoy from our state leaders. The University continued to show its commitment to engaging in the legislative process by hosting another "Colonels at the Capitol" Day last month in Frankfort.

For the second consecutive year, our Board of Regents made it part of a retreat and, this time, extended the event invitation to the President's Council and the President's Leaders in Action Academy. It's a wonderful opportunity for campus leaders to interact with our state leaders. We were also able to express our gratitude for their help in obtaining key resources to further enhance the University.

You will be encouraged to know that many legislators spoke very highly of the level of educational quality that ECU offers its students. Several spoke from personal experience.

We want our state legislators to know that we aren't going anywhere. We are committed to continually advocating an increase in higher education opportunities for our region and the Commonwealth.



### **Aviation Partnerships with Community Colleges Speed Students' Transition to Skies**

Another way we will meet the needs of the Commonwealth and nation in the years ahead is to form partnerships with other educational institutions. One prominent recent example is our partnerships with four community and technical colleges in the KCTCS system: Hazard, Southeast in Middlesboro, Ashland and Owensboro.

EKU now boasts the nation's first FAA-approved, 1,000-hour power, 2 + 2 degree pathway, and the partnerships with the four colleges, selected because of their proximity to airports, are a good start toward our goal to have partnerships with all community colleges co-located with a regional airport.

With this most recent FAA approval, community college students can complete their FAA private pilot through instructor pilot certificates and ratings, their associate degree, their bachelor's degree, and simultaneously earn their 1,000-hour power certificate, all by partnering with EKU Aviation.

### **EKU Online Student Accepted into New Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program**

Online enrollment continues to grow in numbers and as one recent development suggests, the quality of our online programs is keeping pace.

Chris Kidder, who will graduate in a few weeks from our fully online baccalaureate degree program in psychology, is one of 12 students admitted to our new doctoral degree program in Clinical Psychology. He works full time in Frankfort and took all his classes with us online.

His acceptance validates that a well-designed online program, using the same faculty and curriculum, can build the same doctoral-level competencies in our students that our traditional courses can.

### **Students, Faculty and Alumni Making a Difference**

The past month again offered ample evidence that EKU faculty, students and alumni are making a significant positive difference in their communities and even in foreign nations.

Dr. Louisa Summers, a professor in our Department of Exercise and Sport Science, is devoting her sabbatical to helping Wounded Warriors at four camps in Birmingham, Ala. And she is looking for additional opportunities to help veterans with disabilities here on our campus and in our own community.

Candi Graves, a senior environmental health science major, didn't wait to graduate before putting her education to work, helping provide safe water to a village in Haiti. Candi has made three trips to the Caribbean nation in the last two years. This past summer, she partnered with researchers from Clemson University to help a village secure a new UV-based disinfection system. This couldn't happen without outstanding instruction and support from our own faculty.

Then, from Louisville, there's the heartwarming story of David Carter, a former standout football lineman who graduated last May. David, who grew up as a ward of the state, now works as a resident counselor at the Home of the Innocents, a facility serving at-risk youth. He regularly brings groups of students from the Home to Colonel sporting events, giving them a taste of what college has to offer. He gives credit to all the role models he had at EKU, including coaches and faculty.

Lastly, here's a way that we can *all* make a difference. On Friday, April 10, the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Empty Bowls fund-raising event to put food on the table for hungry people in Madison County will be held.

The event is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at First Baptist Church on the Eastern By-Pass. EKU has been associated with Empty Bowls from the beginning, as faculty, staff and students have united to donate their time and talents to ensure its success. I hope we can continue to support this most worthy cause with our treasure as well.

**EKU Named Tree Campus USA**

The ongoing revitalization efforts won't diminish at all our commitment to an attractive campus landscape. In fact, adding attractive green space features is a big part of our plans. And a big part of our Campus Beautiful is the ample number of trees – trees of every shape, size and species.

Our efforts to promote healthy trees and engage students and others in a spirit of conservation have earned ECU 2014 Tree Campus USA honors from the Arbor Day Foundation. I was proud to take part in a recent tree-planting ceremony outside our New Science Building, and I hope to participate to many more such events.

**Commencement 2015**

Finally, I am very pleased to announce Kentucky's Lt. Governor, the Honorable Crit Luallen, has agreed to be our Commencement speaker for the ECU 2015 graduating class. The ceremony on May 15<sup>th</sup> – the first at Roy Kidd Stadium in quite some time now – promises to be a very memorable event. We will present the name of Lt Governor Luallen to receive an honorary doctorate of public service at our Board of Regents meeting on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for your continued service to ECU and our students.