

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson
DATE: February 10, 2014
RE: February Campus Report

My apologies for not being able to join you in person today, but I was required to attend a Presidents' Council meeting for the Ohio Valley Conference in Nashville. Thank you for your continued service to Eastern Kentucky University.

I was intent on sending the following report to you last week before sending it out to campus writ large, but given the University's closure on Monday – and the interest on the part of many constituencies – much of the information below was distributed to all faculty, staff, and students on Wednesday.

With the Legislature in full swing, we continue to make our case to members of the House and the Senate on behalf of higher education generally and ECU specifically. This coming Thursday, the regional comprehensives (NKU, WKU, MSU, and ECU) will present to the Postsecondary Education Subcommittee of the Appropriations and Revenue Committee.

The budget as outlined by Governor Beshear is now being considered by the House. The Governor's proposal included a 2.5% cut for all universities in operating budgets, but there is talk among House members that some of that money needs to be restored. CPE is slated to take a 5% cut. Most state agencies have been told that a cut to operating budgets is to be expected.

I met with members of the Administrative Council last week and we began discussions on the budget. Later this week, I will be meeting with the Council of Postsecondary Education to consider tuition rates and the possibility of the Council setting rates for a two-year period time. The possibility of fee increases are currently being discussed with our student leaders as well.

We continue to work with various groups relative to our internal equity and merit pay and results of these initiatives will be rolled out in the near future. It is important to bear in mind that recurring budgets at ECU are nearly 70% tied directly to personnel. We will continue to emphasize how critical our human capital is and how vital these efforts are in promoting and rewarding our people.

Funds for capital improvements and additions come from completely different funding sources (e.g., state appropriations, bonding, donated funds, a proposed student fee for campus enhancements and improvements, etc.) and we have made a significant institutional investment into our fundraising efforts. This will continue to be a top priority as the "new normal" for public higher education throughout America suggests few state resources and an increased need to develop private funding sources.

Capital Improvements

The proposed cuts in operating budgets were tempered by commitments from the Governor for over \$520 million in capital projects and over \$700 million in agency bond approvals. ECU's share of these dollars includes \$66.3 million for Science Phase II and agency bond approval in the amounts of \$12 million for a parking structure and \$15 million for athletic facility improvements, respectively. We have also submitted an emergency request for \$25 million to rehabilitate (i.e., completely gut and

reconstruct) the Moore Building given the recent failures of that structure. Both the Governor's office and leadership in the House and Senate have been made aware of the dire situation we find ourselves with the Moore Building.

There are many deferred-maintenance issues we are dealing with on campus, with many more on the horizon. While the following list is neither exhaustive nor finalized, it is an outline of what is currently being considered with other potential projects in the works as well. Timelines are fluid, with multiple moving parts in play, and for some of these projects to be realized, other preparatory events need to happen. These projects fit within the scope and plan of EKU's current 2009 Campus Master Plan and we continue to be committed to the Plan's design guidelines which reinforce the campus as a memorable, historic destination that supports innovation and evolving uses (EKU Campus Master Plan, p. 110).

Combs Hall will be razed at the conclusion of Spring semester. A new entry point/gate will be created at the intersection of Barnes Mill Road and Lancaster Avenue.

The Lancaster Avenue tennis courts are slated to be removed with new courts being constructed near our current indoor tennis facility. Plans for this site will be revealed in the near future, with some very exciting ideas for additional open space intended to be part of our efforts to beautify Lancaster Avenue. Additional details are forthcoming.

The complex of McCreary, Keith, Beckham, and Miller Halls will eventually be gutted and repurposed as the EKU Honors Quad. Details are still being refined, but an effort will be made to create an Honors community in the more traditional architecture along Lancaster. The timeline on this move is complicated by the fact that we are considering forming an EKU Housing Foundation, a separate 501(c)(3) entity, as a way to collateralize our current housing inventory to raise funds for the remodel of the Honors Quad and other structures. This move may be a few years away given the uncertainty of the timeline involving the establishment of such a Housing Foundation.

Case Hall and Case Annex will be razed and replaced with a 3 to 4 level parking structure. It is our intent to face the structure with brick to make it fit into this traditional portion of campus next to Keen Johnson. This will be a "fee for parking" structure so that it generates the required revenue to cover the bonds we intend to issue. Additionally, we anticipate restrictions to traffic along University Drive to improve and beautify the look and feel of the Ravine. We are currently working with our Science Building Phase Two architectural team about traffic flow along Kit Carson and ingress and egress issues for this new structure.

Those faculty and staff currently in structures scheduled for razing, renovation, or repurposing will be relocated to other renovated spaces elsewhere on campus. Potential locations include the renovated Moore Building, the remodeled Commonwealth Hall, and other campus locations. The rehabilitation of Commonwealth may be a multi-year process as well. Given the construction and layout of Commonwealth, it can be reconfigured for office space and classrooms, and additional details about this project are still being considered and finalized.

I recently formed an **ad hoc committee on campus improvements and renovation**. The membership of this group is as follows: Michael Benson, Janna Vice, Barry Poynter, Libby Wachtel, David Williams, Ed Herzog, Tom Otieno, Sheila Pressley, Lynnette Noblitt, Sara Carpenter, Mendi Goble (representing the City of Richmond and the Chamber of Commerce), Matt Roan, and Dreidre de Leon

As improvement, renovation, and relocation plans unfold, further input from each of these individuals and the entities they represent – in addition to community feedback – will be sought through building committees and college/departamental meetings. The ultimate goal of all renovations and relocations will be to improve working and learning conditions throughout campus. And how these improvements and changes impact our local community is vitally important as well.

Athletic facilities throughout campus will also be improved and enhanced. Current plans include renovations to Roy Kidd Stadium, the softball and baseball complexes, the track and field area, and Alumni Coliseum. Further study is being considered as to what can and should be done to the Begley Building. It is anticipated that these improvements will come through the auxiliary bonding authority proposed by Governor Beshear and paid for through department of athletics revenue, a possible student fee, and private donations.

New signage is currently being tested and installed around campus. The sign in front of Keen Johnson below is an example of the proposed signage to be installed throughout the University and bears a new, updated logo.



Finally, as renowned architect, Daniel Burnham, once stated: **“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work. . . Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big.”**

NOW is the time to think big for EKU. This is an exciting time for our University. While working amidst such renovation and rebuilding can be inconvenient, we are quite literally forming a solid foundation for the next generation of Colonels. I look forward to working with you to build the future of EKU.