

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson
RE: February 2015 Campus Report

While the campus was closed for two weeks around the holidays, there has certainly been no break in the accomplishments that come from the hard work of our dedicated faculty and staff.

Here are just a few I want to highlight, in addition to other items of interest:

Metacognition Events for Faculty, Students

Considerable work has gone into planning a two-day emphasis later this month on metacognition. The purpose is to enhance the teaching-learning process and student success with proven metacognitive strategies.

A series of sessions featuring noted metacognition scholar Dr. Sandra McGuire are scheduled for Feb. 19 and 20.

On Feb. 19, McGuire will give students “strategies to experience meaningful, transferable learning” in a presentation entitled “The Key to Acing Courses,” from 6 to 8 p.m. in the ECU Center for the Arts.

Then, on Friday, Feb. 20, McGuire will address faculty in two separate sessions in O’Donnell Hall of the Whitlock Building. The morning event will focus on the importance of helping students focus on learning and acquire simple but effective learning strategies based on cognitive science principles. Attendees will engage in interactive reflection activities to experience strategies that significantly improve learning while transforming student attitudes about the meaning of learning. A hands-on follow-up workshop in the afternoon will present faculty with specific approaches for helping students embrace metacognitive learning strategies and will provide attendees the opportunity to practice techniques for motivating students to use the strategies.

Her visit is sponsored by the Office of the Provost as part of the Provost’s Professional Development Series and we encourage all who are interested to participate.

EKU Receives National Honor for Community Engagement

Many of our faculty are involved in projects that reflect ECU’s strong commitment to community engagement and transform lives, improve services and enhance the quality of life throughout the region and Commonwealth. Those efforts are now garnering national attention.

EKU is among only 361 U.S. colleges and universities (approximately 5 percent of the total of institutions) selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to receive the Foundation’s 2015 Community Engagement Classification. Eastern was first honored by Carnegie in 2008.

Colleges and universities with an institutional focus on community engagement were invited to apply for the classification. Unlike the Foundation’s other classifications that rely on national data, this is an elective classification – institutions participated voluntarily by submitting required materials describing the nature and extent of their engagement with the community, local or beyond. This approach enabled the Foundation to address elements of

institutional mission and distinctiveness that are not represented in the national data on colleges and universities.

Eastern was recognized among institutions that are improving teaching and learning, producing research that makes a difference in communities, and revitalizing their civic and academic missions.

CARES Offers Community Grants for Improvement Projects throughout Region

Many faculty work closely with community partners throughout our service region, and ECU's Center for Appalachian Regional Engagement and Stewardship (CARES) is maximizing those opportunities by inviting communities throughout our 22-county service region to submit proposals for one of five \$10,000 CARES community grants.

The grants illustrate the University's commitment to working with these community partners to enhance the quality of life throughout the region, and I'm proud to continue this initiative for another year. It's a great opportunity for our faculty, staff and students to partner with local individuals and organizations and work hand-in-hand to positively impact the places we live, work and call home.

These community initiatives must include ECU partners and focus on one or more of the five following areas identified by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education: economic and workforce development, education, environment, collaborative government, and health, wellness and safety.

ECU Recognized for STEM Efforts, Partners with Schools

ECU was recently recognized as one of the top 125 STEM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics) colleges and universities in the nation, and now we are partnering with five high schools (Madison Southern, Berea Community, Pulaski County, Pulaski Southwestern and Beechwood) to advance among teens awareness of and preparation for STEM fields.

In December, Victory Media announced ECU's designation as a 2015 STEM JobsSM Approved College. Its inaugural list is the first of its kind to rate universities, colleges, community and technical colleges and trade schools on how effectively they align their programs to high-demand, high-paying STEM jobs, how well they assist their students in achieving career aspirations in STEM fields, and their success in attracting and supporting diverse students and faculties in STEM fields.

ECU is the only public institution in Kentucky to make the list and one of a handful to achieve Gold Status, the highest possible rank.

Our partnerships with area high schools will help ease the transition between high school and college by expanding access to rigorous (dual credit) courses and programs in math and science, especially among women and minorities.

Online Degrees Rank among Nation's Best

ECU ranks among the best nationally in the U.S. News & World Report's recently announced 2015 Best Online Education Program Rankings.

Eastern is one of only two Kentucky schools to rank in the top 50 Best Online Bachelor's Degree Programs and Online Graduate Education Programs and is ranked in the top 100 for Online Graduate Nursing Programs.

Nationally, ECU ranked 40th among Best Online Bachelor's Degree Programs, 47th among Online Graduate Education Programs and 61st among Online Graduate Nursing Programs.

This is the fourth year that *U.S. News* has ranked online programs and chosen factors that weigh how these programs are being delivered and their effectiveness at awarding affordable degrees in a reasonable amount of time. The factor given the most weight in the methodology was student engagement, which includes the accessibility and responsiveness of instructors and the ability to interact with faculty and classmates.

Reviewers also considered faculty credentials, resources for training instructors on distance learning, diversity of online learning technologies and staff support. Graduate programs were also evaluated on admissions selectivity. More than 1,200 distance education programs were evaluated in eight different categories.

Congratulations to all the faculty, academic advisers and instructional designers whose efforts are helping our online students reach their educational goals.

Freshman Academy for Diverse Students Building "Culture of Achievement"

The results from the first semester of the Freshman Academy for Diverse Students at ECU suggest the Academy is doing exactly what it was designed to do.

Forty-seven of the 51 Academy participants (92 percent) were in good academic standing heading into the current spring semester. The participants' average GPA for the fall was 2.97, eclipsing the average GPA for all freshman minority students, and 14 students achieved a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Each Academy participant benefited from mentoring by an ECU faculty or staff member and, in some cases, an older, more experienced student.

ECU's African/African American Studies Program partnered with several campus offices to launch the Academy. The year-long interactive learning experience provides first-year students with the information, encouragement and direction they need to successfully navigate college life and reach their academic, personal and professional goals.

Activities include a day-long college skills conference and various interactive workshops as well as academic and social activities. Students who complete the program have the opportunity to win book and tuition scholarships.

Next year's mentors in the program will include 2014-15 Academy participants.

Cortes-Castaneda Wins Colombia's Highest Honor for Excellence in Literature

Growing up on a farm in the Amazon jungle in Colombia, Manuel Cortes-Castaneda was surrounded by horses, which he often rode into town with his large family, and other wild animals. He vividly recalls his father reading "Arabian Nights" at bedtime and even at a young age developed a love for hearing, reading and eventually writing poetry.

It was his fondness for horses that helped him feel at home when life's twists and turns, including marriage to a Kentuckian, brought him to the Bluegrass State and ECU in 1992. But it

was the professor's penchant for writing poetry that took him back to his homeland in December 2014 – to receive Colombia's highest honor for excellence in literature – the José Eustasio Rivera Award, Tierra de Promision (Rivera is one of the South America nation's most celebrated poets and novelists, and Tierra de Promision is Spanish for 'Promised Land.')

Cortes-Castaneda, who teaches Spanish language courses in ECU's Department of Foreign Languages and Humanities, was invited by the Colombian government to be honored during their centennial anniversary of Colombian literature. The award came with a gold medal and goatskin scroll. While in Colombia to accept the honor, he also spoke at universities about the creative process and gave poetry workshops to high school teachers and students.

He estimates that his poems number more than 2,000, many of those collected in a series of published books. His works also include numerous short stories, as well as essays and articles about poetry, short stories, films and general culture.

History Professors Receive National Honors

Books by two ECU history professors have earned national awards.

"Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975," by Dr. Carolyn Dupont, assistant professor of history, earned the annual Frank S. and Elizabeth D. Brewer Prize from the American Society of Church History.

Dupont's book, published in 2013 by NYU Press, examines the faith communities at ground-zero of the racial revolution that rocked America. The book, she said last year, was "an effort to explain how Mississippians' zeal for what can only be described as white supremacy thrived amidst their intense commitments to evangelical Christianity."

Another book, "The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity," by Dr. Todd Hartch, professor of history, was recognized by Christianity Today magazine as the year's best book in Missions/Global Affairs.

Hartch's book examines the changes that have swept across Latin America in the last 50 years and situates them in the context of the growth of Christianity in the global South.

Mock Trial Team Captures Title at Windy City Invitational

The ECU Mock Trial Team continued its stellar season with a first-place finish in the Windy City Invitational, hosted by Northwestern University Jan. 17-18 in Chicago.

ECU compiled a 6-1-1 record in the 28-team event, finishing immediately ahead of its regional rivals, the University of Cincinnati and Bellarmine University.

The Eastern team followed up that victory with a fourth-place finish in the Commodore Classic at Vanderbilt, eclipsing teams from Duke University and Washington University of St. Louis before falling to host and eventual champion Vandy.

ECU faculty and staff working with the program include Tom Parker, Lynnette Noblitt, Kristeena Johnson, Brandon Williams, and Sara Zeigler.

Revamped Scholarship Model Attracting More of Best, Brightest

Faculty can expect to welcome increasing numbers of the best and brightest students, thanks to a revamped model for merit-based scholarships that gives equal weight to ACT and SAT scores and high school GPA.

The University committed an additional \$1.7 million to its scholarship budget for the Fall 2015 class, and that translates to 100-150 additional merit scholarships.

Last year, Eastern added to the Rodney Gross Scholarship Fund to provide more opportunities for minority students as well.

Students and families are already taking notice – not only of the additional scholarship opportunities but also of new residence halls and academic facilities, such as a state-of-the-art science building, and other campus improvements. Applications are running well ahead of last year's pace, as are the numbers of admitted students.

Commencement Honors Graduates and Honorary Degree Recipients Grayson, Carloftis

Perhaps no campus event reflects the good work of our faculty more than a commencement ceremony. ECU's fall commencement on Dec. 13 honored 1,424 degree candidates: 92 associate degree candidates, 1,033 bachelor's degree candidates, 285 master's degree candidates, 1 specialist degree candidate, and 13 doctoral degree candidates.

Also, Trey Grayson and Jon Carloftis received honorary doctoral degrees and addressed the degree candidates.

Grayson, who received an honorary doctor of laws degree, addressed the morning ceremony, which honored degree candidates in the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Health Sciences. Carloftis, who received an honorary doctor of humanities degree, spoke at the afternoon ceremony, which recognized degree candidates in the College of Business and Technology, the College of Education, and the College of Justice & Safety.

ECU to Host Statewide Celebration of National TRIO Day

ECU will host the statewide celebration of National TRIO Day on Feb. 28.

To celebrate the national day, more than 500 Kentucky TRIO students and staff will gather on our campus for various academic competitions, and to attend workshops, take campus tours, draw inspiration from speakers, and participate in the Kentucky TRIO Day Academic Competition awards ceremony.

ECU's own, Dr. Aaron Thompson, executive vice president and chief academic officer with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, will serve as keynote speaker.

By resolution, Congress set the day aside to celebrate the positive impact of federal programs that help underserved and first-generation students to enter college and earn degrees. Unlike student financial aid programs that help students overcome financial barriers to higher education, the original TRIO Programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound and Student Support Services) have been providing supportive services the past 50 years to students from underserved and working families to help them successfully to successfully pursue post-secondary education.

Through the years, the TRIO Programs have expanded to include Educational Opportunity Centers, Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs, Veterans Upward Bound, the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program, and Upward Bound Math/Science Program.

Lisa Sons, director of ECU's Educational Talent Search Program, is the Kentucky TRIO Day chairperson.