

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate  
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson  
DATE: 3 March 2014  
RE: March Campus Report

### **Legislative Session**

The focus of my office – in addition to the Board of Regents – has been on current developments in Frankfort. On Tuesday, the Board had an all-day retreat during which we heard from the Chair of our A & R Subcommittee, Rep. Arnold Simpson, as well as from Rep. Rita Smart. We had meetings with many other legislators, including a chance to visit the office of Speaker Greg Stumbo. The day on the Hill concluded with the Board being recognized on the floor of the Senate. Many folks in Frankfort told us this was the first time they could recall an entire Board of Regents visited the Capitol and how impressed they were with the commitment of our Board to lobbying on behalf of higher education generally and Eastern Kentucky University specifically. It was a very productive day.



On Thursday, the eight University presidents, along with CPE President Bob King, had a private meeting with Speaker Stumbo. We were told that the current situation with the budget and the House negotiations looked as if we would be held to the 2.5% cut but that there was still hope for the capital

projects (all \$520 million for the Commonwealth) coming out of the House version. The challenge will be, if this happens, to convince the Senate to back these essential capital investments. To be sure, much will happen in the next two weeks.

Other issues relative to the Legislative include what level of funding will be granted for our KERS obligations, what funding – if any – will be allocated to Bucks for Brains, and will the agency bonds as proposed by the Governor be approved. We will know more on Tuesday when the House version of the budget is printed. I will keep the campus apprised of any and all developments.

### **Capital Projects**

As outlined to the Board last Tuesday, several capital improvements are currently being planned and will be implemented in the coming weeks and months. Among them are: new signage around campus, the razing of Combs Hall, new way finding and street signs, lights for both our softball and baseball fields, and various improvements to the Alumni Coliseum (including new lights to be installed in April).

Our student government leaders have determined that a complete makeover of the Powell Student Union is the project they would like to focus on (as opposed to the expansion of the Recreation Center) and plans are underway to determine the cost, timeline, and proposed revenue stream to cover this undertaking.

We continue to consider options to improve our housing inventory as well as looking at various alternatives for improved faculty offices and teaching spaces. If our agency bonding is approved, we intend to move forward with our parking structure, although the final location of this deck is yet to be determined.

Our ad hoc Campus Improvement committee has been finalized and will be meeting shortly to discuss these and many other issues. If you have input/feedback for this group, please let us know.

### **Faculty and Staff Salaries**

Each dean has submitted the chair/college's recommendations. The IPEP Review Group is completing its independent review of each department. The next step is for the Review Group to compare the two reviews for each department to arrive at a recommendation. The goal is to have this process completed by April 1.

### **Athletics and Campus Forum**

I had the opportunity to meet with the Faculty Senate Budget Committee last month to discuss the advantages/disadvantages of ECU moving up to play at the Football Bowl Subdivision level with the possibility of a new conference affiliation. It was suggested by this group that a campus-wide forum be held during which the facts and numbers are spelled out in a clear detail. As such, a campus-wide forum will be held at 3:30 p.m. on March 20, 2014, in Brock Auditorium. All interested faculty and staff are invited to attend.

Thanks for your continued service to ECU.