

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson
DATE: October 2, 2017
RE: October Campus Report

My schedule has me in Washington, D.C., today with members of our staff together with Foundation Board members and Regent Lewis Diaz for the annual Washington Center dinner. We support this effort as way to finance internships for EKU students and this year we took advantage of the day in D.C. for meetings on Capitol Hill as well as an introductory meeting at the Cuban Embassy. Opportunities abound for EKU and our students on many fronts and we are trying our best to utilize our board members and other volunteers to open doors for the institution. That said, I apologize for missing today's meeting.

We talk a lot here at EKU about the importance of classroom teaching and about the high quality of our faculty. I mentioned in my report last month that Dr. Matt Winslow received this year's Acorn Award, the highest honor for teaching excellence presented by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Dr. Winslow is the most recent in a long line of winners from Eastern. In fact, since 1995, Eastern can claim more recipients than any other institution in the Commonwealth. More than the University of Kentucky. More than the University of Louisville. More than Western Kentucky University. More than any of our fine private colleges and universities. When we talk about the improvement in our student success metrics, this is the most critical ingredient in making it happen.

Another factor is our living and learning environment. And this past month, we dedicated two facilities that, together with the two new residence halls we opened in August, will go a long way toward helping our student succeed. I'm speaking, of course, of the newly completed Science Building and the Scholar House for single parents.

As for the Science Building, the dedication ceremony was only one event of many in a week that put science and mathematics in the spotlight. I am confident that the many area high school students who visited the facility throughout the week went away impressed and likely more interested in a STEM-related degree and career.

Yet another factor, one of ever-increasing importance, is our level of private support. And there is good news on that front as well. I am happy to note that our Board of Regents Chair, Craig Turner, and his wife, Madonna, recently committed \$1 million as a leadership gift toward a variety of academic, athletic and facility initiatives.

As we strive to recruit, retain and graduate more students, we must never lose sight of the importance of public outreach. And when two institutions can pool their resources and partner for the betterment of the region, so much the better. That is why we are very excited about the recently announced partnership between Center for Economic Development, Entrepreneurship

and Technology (CEDET) at ECU and University of Kentucky's Office of Technology Commercialization aimed at growing the state's economy, with research and intellectual property as the driving forces. This partnership creates a research corridor between ECU and UK, leveraging each of our institutions' individual strengths for the benefit of all Kentuckians.

I want to take a moment to mention our next major initiative as it relates to investment in our campus infrastructure. As you all know I have commissioned a Task Force to work with our faculty, staff, students, parents and other stakeholders to set forth a strategic plan to move our Model Laboratory School forward. That work is well underway with town-hall meetings and scheduled small-group meetings. I am looking forward to reviewing the recommendations that come from that process and the presentation of those findings to our Board of Regents on November 15th. I would encourage each of you to use the survey tool, participate in face-to-face meetings or otherwise engage in this process. Speaking of the Board of Regents, the November meeting will be hosted by the Model Lab School and all are encouraged to attend. In addition to the regular business to be conducted, we will also be hearing the recommendation from the Model Task Force at that time.

I also want to call your attention to a couple of very interesting events on campus this week and beyond.

One is the Holocaust exhibit at Giles Gallery in the Campbell Building through Oct. 25. An opening reception from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday night, Oct. 4, will feature Prestonsburg, Kentucky, resident John Rosenberg, one of the Holocaust survivors depicted in the exhibit. Another is a Chautauqua event on Thursday, Oct. 5, where Co-Director Sally Rubin will present scenes from the forthcoming work, "Hillbilly, The Documentary: 100 Years of Appalachia in TV and Film." The event, at 7:30 p.m. in the Whitlock Building, will help us better understand how many on the outside might view the region we serve and from which we draw a sizable percentage of our students.

Lastly, I want to address a matter related to faculty salaries.

The Senate gave the Administration the charge to find ways to finance salary increases for both faculty and staff. As long as we have to grapple with the ongoing pension crisis in Kentucky, this will always limit the extent to which we would like to increase what our faculty and staff are paid. Nonetheless, we are actively pursuing a mechanism whereby a portion of our Education and General budget (E&G) might be unencumbered to allow us to redirect ongoing funds to salary and benefit increases. Nothing is certain at this point, but we are working diligently on multiple fronts to bring in additional revenue to the University to make this happen.

It has been said that ECU faculty increases over the past decade fall short of cost-of-living adjustments by more than 10 percent. While it is true that those adjustments for each year 2006-17 on the Social Security website total 24.3 percent, and the University has issued 16.0 percent in across-the-board raises in the same period, it is important to keep in mind that

faculty members receive raises for other reasons in addition to the University's across-the-board raises. Therefore, it might be more accurate to evaluate the projected Social Security COLA 2017 salaries compared to actual 2017 ECU salaries for those faculty members still employed in the same rank without appearing to have additional administrative roles. That comparison shows that overall, ECU faculty 2017 actual salaries are at 96 percent of the 2017 projected Social Security COLA salaries. Professors are at 98 percent, associate professors are at 95 percent, and assistant professors are at 96 percent.

Overall, ECU faculty salaries are at 96 percent of our official benchmark institutions for which data were available. Professors and associate professors are at 95 percent and assistant professors are at 98 percent.

The benchmark data cited in the Faculty Senate resolution referred to a custom Kentucky peer group requested by a faculty senator. In order to fulfill that request, an ad hoc comparison group that included Western Kentucky University, Murray State University, Morehead State University, Northern Kentucky University, Kentucky State University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Berea College. (Please note that Berea College was included because the comparison tool required eight institutions.) With that subset in mind, ECU faculty salaries are at 92 percent: professors at 89 percent, associate professors at 92 percent, and assistant professors at 96 percent.

I hope the above information is helpful and, if you have any further questions, I would direct you to Sara Pitt in our Human Resources office.

Thanks very much for your continued service to ECU and our students.