

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate  
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson  
DATE: March 2, 2016  
RE: March Campus Report

### **Continued lobbying efforts on behalf of EKU**

If you have been following the news and my campus updates, you know that EKU and public higher education in Kentucky are campaigning to stave off cuts to appropriations that would endanger our ability to provide the academic programs and support services students need and deserve.

This situation remains fluid, and I urge you to make your voice heard, by any means possible within the next three weeks. We continue to lobby on a daily basis, and I believe we are making headway. As a group of presidents, we met with both House and Senate leadership last week. In addition, each campus president presented to the Post Secondary Budget Review Subcommittee. The link to EKU's presentation is here:

<http://president.eku.edu/sites/president.eku.edu/files/files/Presentations/EKU%20Budget%20Presentation%20Feb%202016.pdf>

We are learning that there is support in the House to reduce the proposed cuts, and they will release their version of the budget within the next few days.

### **Colonels at the Capitol**

Last month, our third annual Colonels at the Capitol Day was an unmitigated success. We had a very strong showing from campus and our larger Richmond community. We have a great message to tell, and we will continue to tell it.

### **Fund raising efforts**

One part of that message is that our alumni and friends value the Eastern Experience so highly they are giving freely of their time, talents and treasure to ensure future generations of Colonels enjoy the same opportunities we do. I noted in previous reports that giving for the first six months of this fiscal year was running well ahead of past performance and that we are coming off our best fundraising year since 2001. Last month brought even better news: EKU graduate and former staff member Maribeth McBride Berman and her husband, Louis, pledged \$1 million to support a combination of academic and student-focused initiatives. You'll be hearing soon about another large gift in support of a student success initiative.

### **Martin Hall time capsule**

I was reminded a few weeks ago that a part of what students and alumni treasure about their Eastern Experience is an attachment to place, including the many wonderful memories they make in our residence halls. A large and enthusiastic crowd was on hand as we opened the contents of a time capsule that was placed in Martin Hall more than a half-century ago. As we utilize public-private

partnerships to construct new residence halls to better meet the needs of our future Colonels and move forward on other much needed projects, the price of that progress will be some temporary inconveniences for many of us. I thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue, undeterred, with our campus revitalization plans.

### **LiveSafe App**

It's also important that we provide the safest possible living and learning environment for our students, so I am happy to report that more than 1,200 individuals have signed up for the ECU version of the LiveSafe mobile safety app since its launch last month. I mention this because the app isn't just for students. It can be useful for all members of our campus community, including parents and visitors. It's available for download on both the Apple and Android platforms.

### **Spring Semester events**

I would like to call your attention to some upcoming events on our campus this Spring. Two of them spotlight up-and-coming academic programs. The other, Idea Festival Bluegrass, will bring bright middle and high school students to our campus as it focuses on college and career choices, especially in STEM fields.

The Idea Festival, April 21-22 at the ECU Center for the Arts, will be headlined by two prominent keynote speakers: Jad Abumrad of NPR's Radio Lab and author Rich DeMillo, noted for his work on the transformation in higher education. This exciting event is planned and facilitated by the Bluegrass Higher Education Consortium, which comprises 12 colleges and universities in our region.

On April 30, ECU will host the first-ever game design conference in Kentucky. The event, to be held in the Perkins Building, is a celebration of game developers from the Midwest and southeastern U.S. and an opportunity for them to network with leaders and peers in the field of game design and development. As Dr. George Landon, director of our Gaming Institute said, this conference will expand awareness of our program beyond Kentucky and cement our standing as the premier game design school in the state and region.

As some of you know, Eastern is the first public university in Kentucky to offer a bachelor's degree option in Global Supply Chain Management, and this relatively young program has quickly built a sterling reputation in the field. Indicative of that reputation, Hitachi Automotive Systems Americas will hold its annual supply chain conference and awards event at the ECU Center for the Arts on May 24. More than 500 leaders representing some 250 global suppliers, as well as approximately 100 global Hitachi leaders, are expected to attend the conference. Much like the gaming conference, this event should raise awareness and enrollment for one of our up-and-coming academic programs.

It's not just our programs that continue to distinguish themselves on a national stage: individual students are doing the same. Meghan Smith, a sophomore marketing major from Berea, recently received a \$10,000 prize for winning an episode of "Cake Wars" on the Food Network. Another student, Mekaella Vilau'u, an ASL and English interpretation major from southern California, is now

interning as an interpreter at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. She is that Library's first-ever interpreter intern.

### **The Essential Eastern**

Some of you were on hand last fall when the film "The Essential Eastern" premiered in our Center for the Arts. The documentary about the history of our University, produced and directed by our own Chad Cogdill, will air on 10 occasions on KET and KET Kentucky from March 28 through April 18. Check your television listings for the exact times, or watch for more information in campus media. I think you'll come, as I did, to an even better appreciation of the rich history of this place and for all those who laid the foundation for what we're doing today.

### **Dr. Janna Vice**

As we learned last month, someone who has embodied "The Essential Eastern" for 40 years, Provost Dr. Janna Vice, will retire at the end of June. Dr. Vice, who earned two degrees from ECU, said in her e-mail to campus that she was honored to be a part of our history and was grateful to all those who supported and believed in her. I can say from a personal perspective that Dr. Vice's contributions will remain an important part of our institution's history and that her outstanding work and unfailing optimism have done so much to enrich it. Janna has always endeavored to ask what is best for Eastern's students. This has been the North Star in her decision making process and I have learned a great deal from her example and friendship. We'll have an announcement later about a retirement reception, and I hope you can join us.

As always, I am grateful for your continued service and commitment.