

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate  
FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson  
DATE: 1 December 2014  
RE: December Campus Report

I am pleased to highlight a few notable accomplishments and milestones enjoyed by our campus in the past few weeks.

### **Campus Comes Together for Colonels' Cupboard**

It is always gratifying to see a community come together to take care of the less fortunate. And that's why I am so proud that ECU is at the forefront nationally of addressing hunger among our students.

As one who was instrumental in its establishment said, the Colonel's Cupboard was created by its own, for its own. And faculty, staff, students and even alumni are continuing to work hand in hand to ensure that none of our students ever go hungry.

As faculty and administrators, we need never forget that some of our students are worried not so much about their next exam as the source of their next meal. Make no mistake about it: the Colonel's Cupboard is a student success initiative. A hungry student, or a student anxious about the basic necessities of life, is a student at risk, regardless of his or her capabilities.

As we continue to address the holistic needs of our students, I especially want to emphasize that the success of Colonel's Cupboard depends heavily on referrals from faculty and staff. To refer a student to the service, visit [communityservice.eku.edu/colonels-cupboard](http://communityservice.eku.edu/colonels-cupboard) or contact the Community Service office within the Division of Student Success.

The pantry is stocked with donations largely stemming from food drives conducted throughout the year by various student organizations and our sports teams, and it has been heartening to see such broad support. As individuals, you can make donations as well.

In addition to providing the short-term solution of food boxes that include well-balanced, non-perishable meals, the Cupboard also offers money management workshops and connects students with campus employment resources as well as community social service agencies.

### **ECU Ranks No. 2 Nationally in 2015 "Best for Vets" Survey**

Another group, I am proud to say, that ECU hasn't forgotten is our military veterans.

For the fourth time in five years, ECU ranks second or higher nationally among four-year schools in the Military Times "Best for Vets" rankings.

Eastern finished second in the 2015 “Best for Vets” rankings after finishing first in 2011 and 2013 and second in 2012. And, of course, we’ve been recognized by numerous other national publications for all we do to help our veterans.

If you were at our Veterans Day ceremony – and I know some of you were – you heard me refer to a clipping I received in the mail not too long ago from a gentleman in Arkansas. It was from a national Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine, and the article touted ECU’s efforts to help veterans pursue a college education. A handwritten note atop the article said simply “ECU, be proud.”

I didn’t recognize the name or the Arkansas address, but an online search soon revealed the sender to be a member of Merrill’s Marauders, a legendary Army unit that fought in the Southeast Asian theatre of World War II.

That he would take the time to write me and commend us for how we treat veterans means a great deal to me, and it should mean a great deal for all of us here at the University.

Simply because it’s the right thing to do, we will continue to support these men and women who have sacrificed so much for us.

But it would be nice too if, when the 2016 rankings are announced, we are back on top where we belong.

### **ECU Again Leads National Collegiate Honors Council in Number of Student Presenters**

It may surprise some folks around the country that ECU has led the nation for 26 consecutive years in one certain and important category of academic accomplishment.

That’s how long Eastern has taken the largest delegation of student presenters to the annual National Collegiate Honors Council meeting.

I was honored to be able to join 39 Honors Colonels and four faculty members for this year’s conference in Denver and I don’t think I have ever been more proud of a group of Eastern students – and their faculty advisors – than I was in Denver.

But this isn’t just about quantity. As evidence of the quality of our Honors Program, the event in Denver included a presentation by senior accounting major Sam Shearer, who received the Portz Scholar Award, the most prestigious student recognition bestowed by the National Honors Council, given annually for the top four Honors thesis projects in the nation.

As we begin to gear up for another capital campaign, it is also worth noting that this nationally-leading level of student participation year after year is made possible by an endowment from Charles and Jane Boyer in honor of the program’s founding director, Dr. Bonnie Gray.

### **Graduate Student Captures Prestigious Psychology Research Award**

Competing mostly against doctoral students from better-known schools, a master’s degree-seeking student at ECU recently earned a prestigious psychology research award.

Second-year Clinical Psychology student Chelsea Sleep, of Louisville, was awarded the 2014 Student Research Fellowship Award from Section IX (Assessment Psychology) of the Society of Clinical Psychology (American Psychological Association Division 12) for her proposal. Competing proposals came from Michigan State University, Villanova University, Pennsylvania State University, Kent State University, Wayne State University and the University of Milan. Only one other student had not yet completed a master's degree.

As her mentor, Dr. Dustin Wygant, noted, awards like this are typically only won by students in Ph.D. programs. The award testifies not only to the quality of our Psychology Program but also to the outstanding mentoring and research opportunities we provide for our students.

As Dr. Wygant has noted, judges rated the feasibility and probability of eventual publication as quite high.

### **Interdisciplinary Asian Studies Program Launched**

A new interdisciplinary program will help EKU students make better sense of the world around them.

As Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Nicholas Kristof once said, "If you want to understand the world, you need to understand Asia."

This new program, which offers an academic minor and certificate, will critically examine the cultures, societies, languages, histories, religions and politics of Asians and peoples of Asian descent throughout the world.

Housed in the Office of University Programs, the new program is the result of a collaborative process involving almost 30 faculty and staff members from various academic programs and units.

Dr. Minh Nguyen, who has done an outstanding job as our Chautauqua coordinator the past four years, will serve as the founding director of the Asian Studies program. The Chautauqua reins will be turned over to Dr. Erik Liddell.

### **University Receives Beautification Award from Local Chamber of Commerce**

We did not undertake so many campus improvement projects in order to win awards, but it's gratifying nonetheless when others notice.

On behalf of the University, I was honored recently to accept one of two Bernease Walters Beautification Awards given annually by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber took note of our efforts to make the campus more pedestrian friendly, maximize green space and enhance our curb appeal.

Remember to follow the progress of various campus improvement projects via Twitter or on the Web at EKUBuilds.

And finally, I am in the process of working on a book proposal about the development of higher education in America (and its blending of English and German models into our unique system), its role in developing our local and national economies, and the fact that it remains the envy of the entire world. There may be areas in which America has deficits or where we fail to lead the world, but higher education continues to be one of our most valuable commodities and most vital investments.

As I have begun the initial research on this book, I found this letter from President Theodore Roosevelt to his friend and the newly-inaugurated third president of the City University of New York, John Finley. It underscores the fact that President Roosevelt recognized what – at its core – higher education is all about and the vital role all those involved in this endeavor play on a daily basis.

**Education as given in the schools and colleges cannot itself fit us for good citizenship. But the lack of it would assuredly render us unfit. You, and those associated with you, and those in the innumerable other institutions of learning throughout the country are doing work similar in kind if not in degree to yours, all alike make the whole body politic our debtors. Next to the home it is the school, the college, the university, which do most to determine the efficiency of the individual as a citizen in this great, self-governing republic of ours; and therefore these who, for their life work, devote themselves to training aright the people who are to shape our citizenship of the future, put the nation in a special sense under obligations to them.**

What you do as members of our faculty at Eastern Kentucky University makes a difference. Your work positively impacts the lives of others. I am grateful for all you do for the University and our community. Thanks very much.