



EKU The President's Report



Online Suggestion Box Fruitful

The online suggestion box that President Benson announced at Fall Convocation quickly triggered more than 700 responses.

Likewise, the first-year EKU leader wasted no time responding to the campus community's concerns and ideas, in some cases pursuing immediate action.

Benson discussed the results of the "real healthy and productive exercise" and noted progress on several fronts when he hosted a campus-wide forum on Nov. 19.

If there's one trait that will distinguish his administration and leadership style, Benson said it would be optimism.

"Nicholas Murray Butler (president of Columbia University, 1902-45) summed up my worldview when he said, 'Optimism is essential to achievement and it is also the foundation of courage and true progress.' You'll see an unrelenting stream of optimism from my office."

Benson began by sharing how the recent strategic budget reallocation process, which resulted in approximately \$16.5 million in new revenue and reallocated funds, has allowed the University to move forward on a number of matters of interest to faculty and staff.

Approximately \$8.5 million, he emphasized, has already been "invested" in people:

\$3.75 million for across-the-board salary increases.

\$1.5 million for new faculty lines.

\$1.3 million for "position backfill."

\$1 million for new positions.

\$1 million for faculty and staff equity.

Other funds have been directed to "programs and places":

\$275,000 for additional diversity scholarships.

\$100,000 for institutional work study.

\$1.3 million for capital and other reserves.

\$200,000 for President's initiatives.

\$384,000 for maintenance and operations.

Dates to Remember

- **January 7**
Kentucky General Assembly Session Begins
- **January 13**
First Day of Classes
EKU Board of Regents Meeting
- **January 20**
Martin Luther King Day
- **March 10-14**
Spring Break
- **April 25-27**
Alumni Weekend
- **May 10**
Commencement

Model Tuition Waiver Policy Clarified

The University's faculty/staff tuition waiver has, in recent years, become a valued benefit for EKU employees or their dependents seeking to earn college credit for courses taken.

Using the waiver to pay tuition for a faculty or staff member's dependent to attend Model Laboratory School, however, is not in compliance with KRS 164.020 or the present EKU Faculty/Staff Tuition Waiver Policy.

Since funds to pay for the waiver are from the state, per Section 177 and 170 of the Kentucky Constitution, any monies paid from the state must be for the purpose and for the general welfare, prosperity and contentment of the state, and not for the individual good of a few select University employees.

Vice Presidential Search Continues

The national search for a Vice President of Marketing and Communications will continue into 2014.

Three finalists for Vice President of University Relations and ECU Branding visited the campus in November. However, at the conclusion of their visits, the campus search committee recommended that the search process continue. President Benson concurred and indicated that the position would be "re-cast" as Vice President for Marketing and Communications, "with the underlying subtext that 'branding' is part and parcel of what this position will do and be responsible for across campus and within our community and beyond."

Benson said each finalist "had attributes and work experience which were very desirable" but "there was not a consensus on a candidate."

The individual selected for the position will integrate several departments and services across campus, from marketing and public relations to printing services and WEKU. "The successful candidate will lead this unit with a creative vision and a unified focus on excellence," said Betina Gardner, dean of ECU Libraries and chair of the search committee.

Until the new position is filled, Mark Sandy, ECU Director of Athletics, will serve in the position on an interim basis, beginning Jan. 1, "in order to pull these areas together as the search continues for a permanent vice president," according to Gardner.

"I am very pleased that we have a capable and committed search committee for this position," Benson said. "This team is working together to help ECU find a leader who can strategically position the University as a local, regional and global leader in higher education."

On Friday, Dec. 6, President Benson announced that Dr. Libby Wachtel would assume the title of Interim Vice President for Student Success, Dr. Brett Morris will take on the responsibilities of Executive Director for Enrollment Management and Dr. Gene Palka will be the Executive Director for Retention and Graduation. All the appointments are effective Jan. 1.

"Each of these individuals is uniquely suited to take on these vital roles," Benson said, "and I thank them for their willingness to serve as we give our newly-created Student Success area both form and function."

Holiday Reminder

Eastern Kentucky University's offices will close for the Holiday Break on Friday, Dec. 20 at 5 p.m. and will re-open at 8 a.m. Monday, Jan. 6, 2014.

As a reminder, faculty and staff are asked to conserve energy by turning off lights, computers and any other electrical items of a non-essential nature.

Spotlight on Staff



Ron Mink
Assistant Director
for HVAC, Refrigeration
and Controls
Facilities Services

Ron Mink has been monitoring, adjusting and repairing heating and cooling systems across campus for almost 37 years.

He also holds the distinction of being elected EKV's first Staff Regent, serving two consecutive terms.

Mink spent his first 20 years in the Electric Shop. When the HVAC department was created in about 1999, he was asked to lead it. What started as a staff of five is now a staff of 12.

"Technology and human monitoring keep track of 200,000 interior spots on campus and maintain temperature and air quality," Mink noted.

Mink said his biggest challenge is "the seasonal changeover from AC to heat and vice versa, predicting the weather and trying to forecast more warm or cold days so you don't change over too quickly. The second one would be maintaining our creature comfort levels while also carefully watching our environmental impact and the money we spend for energy."

Fortunately, he added, he's blessed with a "very dedicated, very knowledgeable" staff. "If there is a problem at 2 in the morning they are right there trying to fix it. The ladies on the phones in the front office who take the calls and complaints are also great. They well earn their money!"

HVAC also occupies much of Mink's "spare" time. He teaches two classes each semester at Bluegrass Community and Technical College and a Cooling and Dehumidification class in the summer.

Focus on Faculty



Dr. Kishonna Gray
Assistant Professor
School of Justice Studies

Dr. Kishonna Gray is very popular among College of Justice & Safety students. Her classes cover interesting and contemporary topics, feature enthusiastic presentations and generate vigorous discussions.

But Dr. Gray is also a subject-matter expert in another popular area among her students - she is a gamer!

"I recognize that video games may seem like a strange subject for scholarly research," said Dr. Gray. "But more than half of Americans play some kind of game on a regular basis and there are theoretical concepts that can be explored from them."

For example, Dr. Gray examines theoretical applications of how video games can be used to help students learn. "Students are mostly unaware that these frameworks can be understood through video games," she said. "But once they learn it, they look differently at media. Many students say that they can't look at Disney movies the same anymore because I challenge them to explore the subordination of women or the stereotyping of ethnic and religious minorities. There needs to be a more nuanced and critical approach to thinking about games, media and other technology beyond viewing them as corrupting our youth or being seen as childish."

Related to video games, Dr. Gray currently has a book manuscript under contract entitled Race, Gender and Xbox live. Additionally, she has published in a variety of outlets including Crime, Media, Culture, and the Journal of International and Intercultural Communication.

Academy Prepares Leaders

EKV, through its membership in the Bluegrass Higher Education Consortium, is participating in the first Academic Leadership Academy.

Six faculty members from Eastern will participate in one-day programs Feb. 14 and May 16 at Georgetown College and EKV, respectively, as well as individualized activities. The EKV participants are: Scott Arias, Instructor, Applied Engineering and Technology; Kristie Blevins, Associate Professor, Justice Studies; Rusty Carpenter, Director, Noel Studio for Academic Creativity; Eric Fuchs, Associate Professor, Exercise and Sport Science; Jessica Hearn, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership; and Randall Swain, Associate Professor, Government.

The one-day programs will consist of sessions covering a number of topics relevant to leadership in higher education. Individualized activities will include reading texts on leadership, creating professional development plans, and working with campus mentors.

The purpose of the Academy is to encourage younger faculty members to consider leadership career paths and to provide guidance in developing the skills necessary for effective institutional leadership.

Dr. Sherry Robinson is heading the effort at EKV.

University Addresses Campus Cats

A Dec. 11 memo from President Benson detailed ongoing discussions about the campus' feral cats.

Dear Campus Colleagues:

As President of Eastern Kentucky University, it is my responsibility to provide our students with a positive, life-changing, healthy environment that allows them to be successful in their academic pursuits.

In order to do that, our faculty and staff must have the resources and facilities which are readily available and environmentally conducive.

Yesterday I met with a group of students, faculty and staff concerned by Eastern's growing feral cat population and how we might best address this matter. Several excellent ideas were offered and will be taken under advisement as we listen to and review concerns from both sides of this issue.

It is my desire to develop a resolution that will benefit the entire community. At yesterday's meeting, it was noted that a group of volunteers headed by Jamie Bratcher, Janet Creech and Nancy McKenney has been formed and will develop a proposal to present to the President's Council.

The overarching purpose of this plan will be to protect the best interests of our community while offering humane ways to address our feral cat population, estimated to be as many as 150 cats. I have every confidence we will be successful because you and I live and work in a caring and committed academic community.

Lastly, I wish to dispel all rumors associated with the handling of Eastern's feral cat population. We have discontinued trapping these cats and turning them over to the Madison County Humane Society until our plan is in place. Furthermore, at no time has the University euthanized any of these cats. We will always treat all living creatures with proper care and respect.

In closing, please feel free to contact Nancy McKenney at nancy.mckenney@eku.edu, Janet Creech at janet.creech@eku.edu or Jamie Bratcher at ekucampuscats@yahoo.com with ideas for consideration. Thank you for your assistance as we move forward.