

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate

FROM: Senator Michael T. Benson

DATE: December 1, 2018

RE: December Campus Report

With roots dating back to 1874, our University has weathered many changes. Each new era brings the opportunity to serve our students, our service region and our Commonwealth in new and different ways. What has become timeless over the last 144 years, however, is our commitment to a quality education, and — just as importantly — delivering that education through exceptionally caring faculty and staff who make our students feel like part of a family. That is what sets ECU apart.

Recently, John Strada, a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication, has been recognized for going above and beyond for those values. He received the Vernon Gantt Award for Distinguished Service from the Kentucky Communication Association for his commitment to service and experiential learning in the classroom. Outside the classroom, Strada was named ECU's first faculty-in-residence at Martin Hall, choosing to live on campus this semester in order to help students become more comfortable interacting with professors. Faculty like Strada make the Colonel Family a true family, and I extend my hearty congratulations on his achievements. If you've never met Strada, you've probably heard him. His is the booming voice reading hundreds of Colonels' names as they are awarded degrees at ECU's commencement ceremonies. His attention to detail and to pronouncing each name clearly and correctly is truly masterful.

In another recent distinction for the Department of Communication, the Public Relations program has once again earned the Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) administered by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Educational Affairs. ECU has held this distinction the second longest of any university in the world. Only 40 programs worldwide are certified, and Kentucky has only two collegiate programs certified — Eastern and WKU.

Of course, the glory doesn't belong entirely to one person or one department. We

have a lot to be proud of this year. During these few remaining weeks of 2018, we can all reflect on EKU's many achievements. Here are just a few of them:

- EKU has received the 2018 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from Insight into Diversity magazine for the third consecutive year.
- Eastern's aviation program was one of only two public universities nationwide represented on panel discussions at the Aviation Workforce Symposium held recently in Lexington.
- Our four-year graduation rate continues its steady rise. It has more than doubled in an eight-year span.
- Our freshman class is the best academically prepared class in recent history.
- Our University is again among the leading four-year schools nationally in the annual Military Times: Best for Vets rankings. EKU finished 12th in the recently announced 2019 rankings. That's the top in Kentucky and surrounding states. The next-highest-ranking institution in Kentucky came in at number 40.
- EKU's new Science Building now has 120 solar modules to help the campus increase its renewable energy supply and reduce its carbon footprint.
- A LEED Gold plaque now adorns a wall in the Science Building atrium. LEED is the most prestigious green building rating system in the world, and its recognition of EKU testifies to the University's focus on energy efficiency and environmental design.

These are just a few of the achievements we have enjoyed in the past few months. Accolades like these don't happen single handedly — success is a collective effort.

In just over a week we will honor our newest class of graduates who will cross the commencement stage beaming with pride. They will step down, all smiles, with hope for a future made brighter by the education they received from Eastern's supportive faculty. Every new college graduate represents a job well done, and we all share a part of that success.

I thank you for your continued service and wish you a very happy end to this semester and a most enjoyable holiday season.