

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate
FROM: President David T. McFaddin
DATE: 2 March 2020
RE: March Report

Even in a leap year, February has flown by and here we are just a week ahead of Spring Break. With this being a budget year of the legislative session, we have spent a great deal of time sharing the mission, successes and priorities of ECU with our elected officials. A highlight of every session is our annual "Colonels at the Capitol" day. We met with important alumni, most of the state's constitutional officers, leadership in the Senate and House and Governor Andy Beshear. It was a full day of meetings and advocating for ECU.

We were able to share several ECU "points of pride" including exceptional work in serving first generation students, highlighting our outstanding academic programs and recognizing we are number one at putting graduates to work right here in Kentucky.

The same day, I also testified in Frankfort along with Rep. Deanna Frazier and Madison County Schools superintendent David Gilliam about Model Laboratory school and specifically the importance of HB 366 to the future of Model Lab and ECU's education mission.

I am pleased to report that HB 366 passed out of the House Education Committee unanimously. Model has been an integral part of ECU for more than a century. While we didn't agree with the former Education commissioner's decision to put Model in a position to need legislation to continue as the state's only laboratory school, we have passed the first test with flying colors.

HB 366 will need to pass the full House, then on to the Senate and ultimately the governor's office.

You can sense a different tone and tenor in Frankfort this year as the Governor's budget does not call for cuts to higher education, the first time for that reprieve in 14 years. From our many discussions with state leaders, we are aware our great Commonwealth continues to have far more needs than it has resources to support those worthwhile and needed programs. While there are many who want to invest, there does not appear as though there is any additional money for higher education funding right now. We were able to have productive dialog about the performance funding model and continue to ring the alarm bells about the imminent threat of the unfunded liability of the state pension system. As with all legislative sessions and state budgets, it's difficult to make a solid predictive outcome even halfway through the session. But we remain cautiously optimistic that at a minimum we will not see a decrease in our funding levels.

While it is welcome news that ECU and education in Kentucky does not appear to be facing cuts, it also means that we must seize the opportunity to grow our enrollment and identify additional revenue opportunities to fulfill our commitment to our students and to our outstanding employees.

To that end, earlier this month our vice president of student success and institutional effectiveness Dr. Tanlee Wasson and her team coordinated a day-long enrollment summit. Nearly 70 participants from all areas of campus gathered to discuss our current state of enrollment. The complex conversations about how we can positively affect enrollment continued with an additional session last week. We have identified a set of aspirational goals and key strategies that will help us WIN at strategic enrollment growth that include a focus on:

- online students
- underrepresented minorities
- out-of-state students
- transfer students
- graduate students
- financial aid
- additional support measures critical to student success.

Expect to hear more about a comprehensive plan to increase both enrollment and retention in the coming weeks.

An important part of retention and student success is the overall student experience and we know as a regional university in the south, there are cultural issues that we must identify and work to improve so that everyone who comes to ECU feels included, at ease and at home. I commend the many offices and organizations that hosted events and programming for Black History Month. I was honored to attend several events highlighting the important achievements of African-Americans and the significant contributions to ALL our history.

This is also the time of year when we recognize the newest members of the esteemed Society of Foundation Professors, the highest honor for teaching excellence at ECU. I offer my highest congratulations to the **2020-2022 Foundation Professors:**

- **Dr. Carol Sommer**, Department of Educational Leadership, Counselor Education & Communication Disorders, College of Education
- **Dr. Wally Borowski**, Department of Geosciences, College of Science

Dr. Sommer and Dr. Borowski were recently notified of their awards, and formal recognition and publicity of the new honorees will take place ahead of the annual Foundation Professor banquet in April.

Other news and noteworthy items since our last meeting include:

ECU Libraries launch the first open-access textbook in African American Studies

The partnership between the African and African American (AFA) studies department and ECU Libraries to publish "Slavery to Liberation: the African American Experience," is an innovative approach to providing quality classroom resources without additional financial burdens for our students.

Approval of four faculty/staff innovation fund proposals by the Board of Regents

- Dr. Lindsay Calderon and Dr. Margaret W. Ndinguri received \$53,000 for continued research of cancer drugs and patents to treat reproductive and breast cancers
- Kelly Smith, associate librarian, received \$25,000 for an alternative textbook challenge grant to incentivize faculty to adopt textbooks and course structures that would allow students to use open educational resources.
- Dr. Michael Bradley and Dr. James Maples were granted \$59,371 to create a research division to offer competitively priced economic impact, outdoor recreation, and tourism research to areas in and around Kentucky.
- A proposal to bring pre-kindergarten childcare to “desert” areas where childcare is difficult to find was presented by John W. Roden III Executive Director: Early Childhood Programming and will receive \$99,000.

EKU Earns Gold Rating for Veterans

EKU is the only university in Kentucky and one of only 72 nationwide to earn Gold distinction in the 2020-21 rankings released recently by Military Friendly® (militaryfriendly.com).

EKU Junior Selected as Truman Scholar Finalist

Junior public health major Breanna Bowling has been selected as a finalist for the highly competitive Harry S. Truman Scholarship recognizing juniors who excel in leadership and public service and grants up to \$30,000 for graduate study.

Alumnus Librarian Honored

Brad Marcum, Eastern Kentucky University Librarian, has received the Kentucky Library Association’s Outstanding Academic Librarian award. This prestigious award is given to a member who has been nominated by a colleague for showing excellence within the field.

College of Business & Technology Senior Director of Development Receives Beth K. Fields Award

Sharron Townsend was awarded the prestigious Beth K. Fields award from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education Kentucky (CASE-Kentucky). The award is designed to recognize someone who continually goes above and beyond the call of duty in both the profession and on behalf of CASE-Kentucky.

Congratulations to all involved in these individual and collective honors. With just two full months left in this semester, we have much to celebrate and still much opportunity ahead. Enjoy the Spring Break, and let us all return refreshed and renewed to give our all for our students and our great University.

Thank you for all you do
David T. McFaddin