To: EKU Faculty Senate
From: Senator Michael T. Benson
RE: October Faculty Senate Report
Date: October 6, 2019

We are already two months in to the 2019-20 academic year and we can recognize several “maroon letter” moments for Eastern Kentucky University. Just this weekend we welcomed hundreds of alumni back to campus in celebration of EKU Homecoming, and we inducted the newest class of EKU Alumni Award winners.

Our alumni are crucial stakeholders for the University. When we are able to celebrate their success, it brings to light the academic excellence and career preparation provided by EKU’s talented and caring faculty and staff. They represent our University, they serve as inspiration and mentors to current students, they can help recruit prospective students, and it is always our desire they in turn will invest in the future of EKU through philanthropic support.

As public funding wanes, coinciding with increased pension costs and enrollment challenges, private support is critical to continue funding our key initiatives and priorities within our strategic plan. With this in mind, last week EKU launched the public phase of our second-ever comprehensive campaign.

“Make No Little Plans-The Campaign for EKU” includes a $50 million goal, of which $39 million has already been committed. The campaign focuses on three pillars:
- Academic Excellence
- Student Success
- Campus Revitalization

Each of these areas profoundly shape the student experience at EKU. All of us can contribute to meeting our goals in these areas. To learn more about the campaign and make a pledge or gift, visit https://www.eku.edu/campaign. Thank you to
the faculty, staff, alumni and other supporters who have already joined this
effort.

Another key element of our financial stability is tuition revenue. While we await
the official enrollment snapshot from CPE this month, we do know recruitment
and retention of our students will be a primary priority in the year ahead. Each of
us can influence decisions of students to enroll or stay enrolled at EKU. I am
calling on everyone to consider ways they can contribute to meeting our
enrollment goals. I am trying my best to be part of the recruiting process,
particularly is it relates to visiting local high schools and making an hour long
presentation about the importance of higher education, generally, and why we
believe these students should come to EKU, more specifically. The schedule for
the next two months is below and if any of you have contacts with these schools
(through faculty, counselors, students, parents, or administrators) that would be
helpful in reaching more students, please let me know.

*Thursday, October 17th: Estill County High School*
*Friday, October 18th: Perry Central High School*
*Tuesday, October 22nd: Madison Southern*
*Wednesday, October 23rd: Madison Central*
*Friday, October 25th: Somerset High School*
*Monday, November 4th: George Rogers Clark High School*
*Tuesday, November 5th: Whitley County High School*
*Monday, November 11th: Danville High School*
*Friday, November 15th: Pulaski County High School*
*Wednesday, November 20th: Frederick Douglass High School*
*Thursday, November 21st: Scott County High School*
*Friday, November 22nd: Southwestern High School (Pulaski County)*

Funding needs have also been highlighted in recent news related to Model
Laboratory School and a finding by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE)
that challenges the funding structure of Model. It is an agreement that has been
in place for more than 30 years. KDE issued an interpretation that Model should
either continue to receive public funding or charge tuition, but not both. The
current budget structure relies on three funding components, the first of which is
EKU support to serve key academic program partnerships and an innovative and
rigorous on-campus K-12 education option for our faculty and staff’s children and dependents. This commitment is not affected by the KDE decision.

The remainder of Model’s budget comes from a funding agreement to receive state allocations in partnership with Madison County Schools and tuition charged to Model students. Removing one piece of this funding structure would dramatically change the school as we know it. The clearest path forward is seeking a legislative solution that establishes a sustainable funding structure. EKU, Model and Madison County Schools are already working collaboratively with KDE and legislators to consider all options to resolve this issue.

The call for investing in education at all levels will be echoed this week when we welcome CPE President Dr. Aaron Thompson back to EKU for his listening tour on Wednesday, October 9. I invite everyone to attend his public listening session to be held at 5 p.m. Wednesday in the Perkins Building.

Looking back on what we have accomplished so far this year I also want to acknowledge some recent achievements including:

- The 20th Year of the Chautauqua Lecture Series
- The Third Annual EKU Science and Math Week
- EKU’s SPJ Chapter’s “First Amendment Week” recognized as Campus Program of the Year
- EKU’s accounting program endorsed by the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA®)

There are many more successes we can collectively celebrate throughout the year and thank you for the important role you play in making EKU the best it can be. I firmly believe we will rise above any adversity we face if we remain committed to our institutional goals.