



David T. McFaddin
President

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate

FROM: Senator David T. McFaddin

DATE: 03 May 2021

RE: May Report

May is such a special time in Kentucky. As the excitement of this weekend's Kentucky Derby reverberates throughout the Commonwealth, it is fair to say we too are now rounding the final turn, and this week we will head down the stretch to close out an academic year worthy of celebrating. This year has certainly tested our resolve and I could not be prouder of how everyone has persevered. The dedication our faculty, staff, and students have demonstrated to push through incredible trials affirms what I have always known, that EKU is a community full of heart and determination, willing to take any challenge head-on and come out stronger in the process. That fortitude is worthy of celebrating whether it came in the form of redesigning your courses or your classroom, taking the time to support students or colleagues through illness or anxiety, following all the proper health protocols, getting tested and quarantining if sick, and getting vaccinated to stay well. Hats off (derby or otherwise) to each of you for doing your part.

Because of our success in controlling the spread of illness within our campus community and the diligent work of many departments and committees, our commencement ceremonies this week will be once again in-person for the first time in a year and a half! Commencement will look different and will observe attendance limits, however, it is an honor to be able to greet our graduates for the first time as EKU's President and confer the degrees they have worked so hard to complete. Thank you especially to our COVID-19 and contingency task forces, commencement committee, the Registrar's Office, Deans, Public Safety, and Conferencing & Events for all the work that has gone into reinventing spring commencement at EKU. We hope it will be a beautiful day and the beginning of many more opportunities to safely gather as a campus community.

We are planning much more "normalcy" for the fall semester. As long as current state and federal health guidelines allow for it, we are fully expecting a return similar to fall 2019 on-campus course delivery. We are resuming in-person admissions activities, restrictions are easing on student housing and programming, and we are planning to welcome our next freshmen class to campus with a redesigned and reinvigorated "Big E Welcome". Along with many of our traditional experiences that have become hallmarks of the EKU experience, the Exceptional Eastern Experience (E3) team is planning some new and innovative programs for this upcoming year. A signature concert the Saturday of Big E welcome, new post-athletic student /community events in Powell Plaza, a Halloween Bash, beer gardens, comedians and food trucks will help headline a calendar of events and engagements that will far exceed anything ever done before. We are so excited to define the "NEXT" normal at EKU as one that everyone has been longing for.

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Great things are ahead at EKU. We do anticipate some enrollment decline as college planning nationwide has been distinctly impacted by COVID-19 uncertainties, but we remain dedicated to closing the gap between those who have applied and been admitted to EKU and are yet to fully enroll. This is a very important finish line we must all work toward crossing. We want EKU to be the first choice for both students and our faculty/staff. No one can tell the story of Eastern better than we can. Our graduating students often express incredible gratitude for the caring faculty who helped them reach their academic goals, and as faculty you are able to offer first-hand accounts of our outstanding programs and the career successes of our alumni. You can also share examples of excellence in your profession as we look to recruit top talent to join us in these efforts. As I often say, we are ALL recruiters and that holds true now more than ever in a highly competitive and untraditional higher education recruitment year. I urge you to use your voice and influence as much as possible to promote your programs and our institution.

As we finalize budgeting in the upcoming months, we will do all we can to keep college affordable, maximize resources, and be strategic in our investments. Evolving consumer behaviors will require us to be flexible and nimble, with goals of innovation and excellence in all areas and practices. Some visions will take time to achieve, but we must keep pressing forward to show our state and the world that Eastern innovates!

A few successes in this vein to note include our recent EKU Giving Day. The engagement of more than 1,800 donors shattered the initial goal of 1,000 in 24 hours. This will help us foster a culture of giving among all our constituencies. To those of you who gave, and advocated for giving, a sincere thank you for supporting this campaign and leading by example.

The EKU BookSmart program that will launch this fall has received a great amount of buzz and excitement among both new and returning students. I wish I had taken a screenshot from a recent Zoom interview with a local television anchor to share the actual “jaw-dropping” moment when I explained yes, all the books are really free for undergraduates. The organic reaction to this effort to eliminate as much as \$1200 a year in costs for our students was priceless. This program sets us apart from any other institution in Kentucky, and perhaps the entire nation, in removing barriers to success when students struggle to afford their textbooks and required class materials. It will be extremely rewarding to know how better prepared our students will be thanks to BookSmart on their first day of class this fall.

I am also very proud to report that we have seen incredible progress in our CPE Diversity Report this year. This is an area where we deployed targeted resources and attention to improve. Some of the highlights include:

- EKU received a score of 32 out of 36 which highlights our institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- URM retention rate (80.3%) is the highest among the regional comprehensive Universities and significantly surpasses our 67% target
- Retention of low-income students is 76.7%, the highest among the regional comprehensives and surpassing our target of 72%
- To expand recruitment efforts, MOUs were signed with Adelante Hispanic Achievers in Louisville and the Cincinnati Public School System
- Enrollment of Undergraduate URM has increased 8.2%
- Enrollment of Undergraduate Latino/a population has increased 43%
- Graduate URM enrollment has increased 25.2%

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There is still much work to do, but this is encouraging data that will help strengthen our campus community as a welcoming and inclusive environment where all students can embrace opportunity and succeed. Huge thanks to the drafting team members for this report: Dannie Moore, Gill Hunter, Lisa Day, Bethany Miller, Roger Cleveland, and Ron Jackson.

As we head into the summer months I have just a few “assignments” to ask of you all. In addition to assisting in our recruiting efforts by sharing your own testimonials and endorsements to prospective students and their families any way you can, please remain engaged in our ongoing searches for college deans. The timing of the search cycle will require work through the summer and I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunities to share your feedback at various stages. The national search firm assisting us in this process will work diligently to identify the best and brightest candidates near or far to move into these important academic leadership roles. We hope to have announcements on these hires at the end of the fiscal year.

Finally, we have some important leadership changes to note. Thank you to Senator Marco Ciocca for his leadership as Chair of Faculty Senate as he finishes his second term. You likely got more than you bargained for holding this office through a pandemic, but I personally am glad that if we have to hold these meetings over Zoom, that they are led by someone with an entire galaxy of virtual backgrounds at his disposal. We must also bid farewell to an incredible Provost, Dr. Jerry Pogatshnik. His wisdom, leadership, and dedication have proven invaluable both to ECU and to me personally. After 15 years at ECU and three decades in higher education, he certainly has earned his retirement that will become official June 30. I am certain we will have a successful and seamless transition as Dr. Sara Zeigler assumes leadership of Academic Affairs this summer. Thank you for your spirited and dedicated service Jerry, and best wishes in your next chapter. You leave ECU as the only retiree in history chosen as a namesake for both a student employment network (PENGUIN) and a famed turtle of Lilley Cornett Woods (see photo below, credit Dr. Stephen C. Richter). Your legacy will be unmatched, thank you for your service to ECU, our faculty, staff, and students.

Best wishes to all of you for finals and commencement week, and may you have a restful and restorative summer. I hope you return ready to hit the ground running next fall, whether your pace is that of the turtle “Jerry Jr.” or the Derby winner. What matters most is that we stay the course, and finish strong.

One Eastern,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David T. McFaddin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David T. McFaddin, Ed.D.
President



Enjoy a chance to slow down some in your retirement Jerry!

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