



**Dr. Richard E. Day**

Associate Professor, Educational Foundations  
EKU Faculty Regent

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**Eastern Kentucky University, Combs Building, Room 100**  
**521 Lancaster Ave, Richmond, Kentucky 40475**

To the Faculty:

4 November 2016

Folks,

The Board of Regents met in regular session on Monday, Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>.

We received a report from Exec VP Laurie Carter on our **enrollment management** data. As has been widely reported, EKV's freshman retention rate is at an all-time high. Four- and five-year graduation rates continue to trend upward. Overall enrollment remains relatively steady at ~17,000 students. This year's freshman class was the best-ever academically, and second largest in our history, only behind the prior year. One important key to future budgetary success is our effort to attract and retain the best students. This is doubly true under the forthcoming performance-based funding cuts. (Strategic goal #2)

The board was updated on our various **construction projects**. Paul Gannoe reported that all projects were on schedule and on budget. (Strategic Goal #5)

- Expect phase 2 of the New Science Building to be completed around June 2017 (State \$).
- New Martin Hall and New Hall B are expected to open in Fall 2017 (P3 \$).
- The new Scholar House slated for completion by Summer 2017 (P3 with Kentucky River Foothills).
- A new 320-space parking garage is expected to open in July 2017 (P3 with Kentucky River Foothills).
- The renovation of the student union and a new student recreation and wellness center are both in the planning stage. Gannoe expects construction to begin on the fitness center in Fall 2017 (expected completion Spring 2019). Construction on the student union will commence in Spring 2019 (2020 completion) (Student special usage fee).

- The new dining hall, financed by Aramark, is expected by late 2017/early 2018 (P3 with Aramark).
- The Carloftis Garden is expected to be completed by next summer (same P3 as residence halls).
- Repairs to the Lancaster Avenue pedway should be finished in time for the Spring 2017 semester (insurance \$).
- A second pedway, across the Eastern By-Pass near Alumni Coliseum, is now in the design stage (expected Fall 2017).

Development VP Nick Perlick reported that private support for the past fiscal year doubled over the past year to ~\$8.9 million, an all-time high for the institution. While he doubts it will be possible to double gift receipts for a third year in a row, he remains optimistic about continued growth. That \$8.9 million figure contains all **fundraising** activity: ~\$4 million in cash and other “real” gifts, like stock, property, equipment; ~\$1.8 million in major pledges to be received over the next 2-5 years; and ~3.1 million in bequests (Strategic goal #4).

Crowe Horwath LLP reported a “clean” **audit** of the university, which the Board adopted (Strategic Goal #4).

The Board also approved the **campus master plan**, and routine **personnel** actions including **promotion and tenure** (Strategic goals #1 and 5).

The **2016-17 budget** was approved. Dr. O’Brien and I noted the inadequate \$2,700 line item for Faculty Senate, which has been greatly supplemented by the Provost in recent years, and recommended that we create a realistic budget line for the Senate that would not be beholden to the will of the next provost to fund.

Dr. Vice and the Deans had been working on an opportunity for eligible faculty to participate in an Enhanced Retirement Transition Program (ERTP), which she announced. But there is a very quick turnaround time on this opportunity. Faculty who meet the criteria for **ERTP** must be eligible to retire by no later than July 1, 2017, and **confirm their intentions by no later than Monday, Nov. 14**. The ERTP allows faculty to continue teaching half time for one or two consecutive years (2017-18 and 2018-19) and provides a salary up to 50 percent of the applicant’s nine-month base salary upon retirement.

As you may recall, we had an unresolved \$2.5 million deficit in the current budget year for **scholarships**. Over the year we accrued ~\$4 million in one-time (non-recurring) money. Those funds covered the deficit and allowed the university to implement the ERTP.

On Monday November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Faculty Senate will be asked once again to consider recommendations of **program suspension** from the Academic Budget Review Committee. At our last meeting, the Faculty Senate decided to withhold its recommendations “until the full report on the budget cut recommendations is available for review.” None of us want the President to finalize plans without faculty input, but the Senate refused to provide that input until it sees a final plan – kind of a Catch 22, with mutually conflicting dependent conditions.

This move, along with the timeline established in policy governing the Faculty Dismissal Committee, placed the President in the position of formulating his recommendations without the timely advice of the Senate. This is somewhat problematic because the Senate failed to perform the primary function for which it exists – to make “recommendations to the President on academic policy...” which is the essence of shared governance according to the AAUP. There is still no “full report” for the Senate to review in advance of Monday’s meeting.

I am certain the President will make whatever allowances for faculty input he can, but he is under a mandate from the Board to produce recommendations and he is already looking at options. These options may include strategic and/or across-the-board cuts. The latter could potentially impact every program on campus - including our most productive. In his message to the campus on October 28<sup>th</sup>, the President reminded us that we cannot afford to take lightly the evaluation of programs based on the number of students we are retaining and graduating. Our fiscal strength going forward depends upon it (Strategic goal #4).

The Board has clearly heard objections from faculty members who would solve our current budget shortfall by eliminating **intercollegiate athletics**. My sense is that the Board sees athletics as being among our most successful programs and I doubt there is any intention of eliminating intercollegiate athletics at this time. If larger cuts from the state remain on the horizon, I suppose that could change down the road.

All of this can be discussed at the **Budget Forum** announced by President Benson for **November 9<sup>th</sup> at 3 PM in the ECU Center for the Arts**. I encourage you to attend and register your concerns and suggestions directly with the president.

The Board plans to act on the President’s recommendations in a special meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

As frustrating as this process is, I hope the Faculty Senate will perform its central function and give President Benson its best advice. I would also remind the Senate of the successes we have had when cooperating with the administration in the past. Over the past few years - together - we reshaped the faculty annual review process from a top-down collection of due dates and mandates, to a new focus on professional development and scholarly research. Together, we helped improve faculty salaries while reestablishing faculty authority over academic programs. Even in these difficult times, I believe we will reach our best result by working together.

Sincerely,



Richard