

TO: The Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate
FROM: President David T. McFaddin
DATE: 3 February 2020
RE: February Report

I want to wish everyone a very happy new year. I hope you enjoyed the winter break and it is truly an honor to welcome you back. The beginning of this new semester and new decade finds me leading in a new way as the Interim President of ECU. This appointment humbles me, and it is my pleasure to begin the semester working with and for you and our students. The work conducted by faculty is the broad shoulders where our University stands and reaches new heights. Our students are fortunate to have each one of you teaching, mentoring and serving them to the very best of your abilities. As a first-generation college student from rural eastern Kentucky, educated right here at ECU, I have experienced the transformative power you have to set students on a successful path. Faculty that came before you also have my thanks. Without them, I would not be addressing you today. ECU is a great university. I promise you; I will work tirelessly to ensure your work continues to change lives for the better. A better future for students, better professionals for employers, and a better outlook for the Commonwealth and beyond.

Less than a month has passed, and the old saying “hit the ground running” is an understatement. The work of the University waits for no one. January has been a busy month, and the pace shows no signs of slowing.

Priorities

In a recent communication to campus, I presented the priorities that will be a major focus of the administration. Every priority wrap around student success. For me, how we educate our students is the nucleus of any goal we have now or in the future. We cannot achieve any of these priorities without academic excellence. With the strength of the academy behind us, there is nothing we cannot accomplish. Critical goals moving forward include:

- **Strategic Enrollment:** Student recruitment and retention are vital to our success. Educating our students is our guidepost as an institution of higher learning. It is also our primary source of revenue as state support continues to erode.
- **Financial Stewardship:** We must continue to discover efficiencies that focus on increasing net revenue in all areas of the institution to ensure greater access and affordability for all students.
- **Student Experience:** Our students deserve to have a unique *Eastern Experience* that is transformational and differentiates ECU from other colleges and universities.
- **Institutional Operations and Culture:** We must embrace an inclusive culture of service to each other, our students, and our community through empowerment, engagement, and efficiency.

Strategic Enrollment

I must call special attention to the first area of focus, strategic enrollment.

As academic excellence is the springboard for many university priorities, strategic enrollment management is the glue that supports the rest of the proposed goals. With more qualified students, it clears the path for better financial strength, robust student experience, and enhanced efforts to empower people from all walks of life. We must have a laser focus on the recruitment and retention of students. We accomplish this by sharing responsibility among the entire campus to invite students to the ECU table. Faculty play a primary role. As the heart, head and hands of ECU, you have more access and insight to students than anyone else on our campus. It is valuable information and influence. It should be shared so we can better understand our student body and meet them on their terms. It is no secret that many students choose a college because of the programs. You are the experts in our degree offerings and have impactful information for a prospective student. We must uncork that knowledgebase and use it to help us with enrollment. But enrollment does not lie with one group. It is a campus-wide responsibility. Everyone at ECU, in some way, influences the student experience.

Last Friday, I, along with a cross-section of campus, participated in an enrollment summit organized by Vice President Wasson. It was very enlightening, and many points of importance have been identified and are currently under refinement. I will report more about the summit at our next meeting.

Budget Update

As we continue to make progress on campus, there is much happening only a few miles up the road. I attended the governor's budget address this past week. I left hopeful that education as a whole, and higher education in particular, are at the forefront of the most important investments for our Commonwealth. While there are many priority areas and numerous challenges, I am hopeful that everyone can see that universities like ECU are economic drivers for the state. For the first time in more than a decade, the executive budget proposal is, in a word, optimistic. We are supportive of the central tenants of the plan. However, we also understand there is still a long road ahead as lawmakers begin the budgetary process.

CPE

Earlier in January, I had the opportunity to represent ECU at the annual CPE campus scorecard board meeting. I, along with other university presidents, presented to the board about the general status of the University based on the metrics identified by the CPE. ECU has reached or surpassed the goals set by the CPE in many areas including, student retention, degrees awarded, four, five- and six-year graduation rates, and more. It is an honor to represent ECU to the CPE board and share the Eastern story about the great work you do every day.

ARC grant

A nearly half-million-dollar investment in eastern Kentucky will bring hands-on experience with Eastern Kentucky University's highly touted aviation program directly to students in ECU's service region. The purchase of two dozen virtual reality flight simulators, to be placed throughout the Appalachian region, is being made possible with a nearly \$360,000 grant from

the Appalachian Regional Commission. A matching grant from the University of more than \$98,000 brings the total amount of the project to \$453,000.

The flight simulators will operate at high schools, ECU regional campuses at Manchester and Corbin, and regional training centers. Strategic locations will provide coverage to allow more substantial exposure to the exploding aviation industry.

High school, community college, and regional campus instructors and support staff will train on how to use the virtual simulation reality (VR) technology in a train-the-trainer/teach-the-teacher model. This training provides students with the opportunity to repeat lessons until mastered. It will translate seamlessly into real, hands-on aircraft training and exposure for high school students who may be interested in a career in aviation, aviation maintenance, or other STEM career paths.

EKU online degrees best for vets and nurses

U.S. News & World Report has once again ranked Eastern Kentucky University's online degree programs among the best in the nation. ECU is 39th on the list of Best Online Programs for Veterans. The school also made the top 50 list of Best Online Programs in Nursing for the fifth consecutive year, performing better than any other Kentucky school. ECU's online bachelor's programs and graduate degrees in education moved up in the rankings, landing in the top 100.

Scholarship opportunity for Veterans

Five Eastern Kentucky University student veterans recently received the Edith Nourse Rogers Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Scholarship. The scholarship is a provision of the Forever GI Bill that gives additional benefits to students training in high-demand STEM fields. The scholarship offers students the opportunity to finish their STEM degree program or teaching certification with significantly less student debt or out-of-pocket costs. Sixth District Rep. Andy Barr (R-Ky) was on hand to present the scholarships. He introduced the bill last April, which amends the credit hour requirement of the scholarship program in the Forever GI Bill, making the scholarship more accessible to veterans across the country.

Wilder named educator of the year

Retired Eastern Kentucky University Professor, Dr. Melinda Wilder, has been recognized by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) as the 2019 Higher Education Educator of the Year. For years, Dr. Wilder has served on the board of the Kentucky Association for Environmental Education, partnered with Ecology Project International, and improved Yellowstone National Park's teacher fellowship program. In 2005 she assumed the role of Director of the Division of Natural Areas at ECU. The following year, she led the development of an environmental education endorsement program at ECU that was accredited by NAAEE and later by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Congratulations to Dr. Wilder.

Matt Roan selected as Director of Athletics

Eastern Kentucky University has named Matt Roan as Director of Athletics after a more than two-month search process. Roan returns to ECU after three-plus years as Director of Athletics at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La. Matt will begin his duties this month. Please welcome Matt and his family to campus. His background with student-athletes to perform on the field is impressive. But even more important is his attention to their well-being in the classroom.

All A Classic

Last week and weekend, we hosted the All A classic basketball tournament. It is the third year for the competition since its return to ECU. We had record-breaking attendance as thousands of high school students, parents, and fans got a glimpse into the Eastern experience while enjoying a top-notch sporting event. This event brings together an incredible group of people from the University, the city, and the All A organization. It is a productive partnership and a boost to our community relationships. It is also a chance to connect with potential students and their parents. I applaud the excellent work of our staff. The conferencing and events team is second to none. This year we entertained visits from Governor Beshear, and LT. Governor Coleman. It was a great event to showcase our University.

In closing, I am excited to work with you in an expanded capacity. I ask that you approach this semester with an open mind and open heart, especially when it comes to our students. In my opinion, we are the luckiest people on the planet. Transforming lives for the better is very powerful. We must nurture that privilege. Our students deserve it and there is no one better to deliver it.

Thank you for all you do,
David McFaddin