

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

## EMU COE Prepares Bloomfield Hills Superintendent for Success



PAT WATSON

As the superintendent of Bloomfield Hills Public Schools—one of the top school districts in Michigan—Pat Watson attributes a large part of his success to his time at EMU. Proudly earning three degrees from the university over the course of four decades, he believes no other school compares to preparing teachers and administrators for the workplace.

Watson's call to teach came early in his life. Growing up in Ann Arbor, he had teachers who provided the consistency he needed in his childhood. Seeing the constant recognition EMU received as a school of education, he knew the school was a natural fit. Utilizing Pell and supplemental grants, in addition to working full-time, Watson was determined to impact children's lives the way his teachers had.

"I remember being taught by Rochelle Balkam, who also happened to be a teacher at Ypsilanti High School," said Watson. "We would always discuss theories in our book, but she would also add what happened in her class that week and the strategies she used on her kids. Having that real-world perspective was invaluable."

Watson returned to EMU for his master's degree, and later his specialist degree. Each time, he was exposed to professors who applied firsthand experience to his lessons. He even worked with the late, legendary EMU job fair coordinator Theophilus "Uncle Theo" Hamilton, who helped him and countless other teaching students prepare their resumes, answer mock interview questions, defend their portfolio and coordinate interviews.

"Thanks to Uncle Theo, I walked into the job fair in May 1994 extremely confident that if there's an opening, I have a great chance of getting the job," said Watson, "I left with around eight job offers and additional callbacks."

Over his illustrious career, Watson made transitions from teacher, to department head, to athletic director, to assistant principal, to principal and now, finally, superintendent. All of those roles had a class at EMU that

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PAT WATSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF BLOOMFIELD HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### READ MORE...

- How EMU Simulation Lab Gave One Student the Confidence to Succeed
- Scholar Success: Jennifer Banks
- Give Rise: The Campaign for Eastern Michigan University is Officially Here

Like our student body, the array of scholarships available at EMU is diverse. They cover every college, every discipline, and were established by donors from differing backgrounds. The commonality is that they provide often-crucial support to recipients. Scholarships help ease the growing financial burdens of college while motivating students to excel in their studies and stay on track to graduate. These scholarships exist because you established and contribute to them. This report provides a small snapshot of the impact of your continued support. You ARE the difference. Thank you for your generosity.

prepared him. Even his superintendency class was taught by a former superintendent who passed down tangible knowledge and anecdotes about what the job is like.

With the current state teacher pool at a discouraging low, Watson advocates for more programs that support future educators and get more young people into the profession. For current students, he holds the belief that your network ends up being your net worth. The wider you can expand your network, the more opportunities you're going to have.

"EMU is sometimes overlooked with Ann Arbor right down the road, but it would behoove a lot of future college students to give it serious thought," said Watson. "The opportunities and scholarships available are some of the best, and there's the added benefit of being able to reach out to proud alumni like myself for mentorship and advice."



To help support the next generation of teachers and administrators, you can donate to the COE Student Emergency Fund by visiting [emich.edu/give](https://emich.edu/give).

## PROGRAM REPORT

# How EMU Simulation Lab Gave One Student the Confidence to Succeed

In 2015, EMU transformed an ordinary classroom into a state-of-the-art simulation lab. Today, it can mimic almost any patient scenario that a future medical professional might reasonably experience. Alumni and speech-language pathologist (SLP) Kari Burton took full advantage of the EMU Simulation Lab and several other opportunities during her time as a student, leading to a prestigious internship and career success.

"The reality of getting a job as an SLP is that you have to have hands-on experience with tracheostomies," said Burton. "Simulation labs are needed to truly provide students with the experience and knowledge they need to become competent professionals entering the medical field."



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KARI BURTON, SLP

- While a student, Burton was recommended for a prestigious internship with the VA Medical Center by her professor, Dr. Ana Claudia Harten, that provided her invaluable experience learning from some of the top SLPs in the state. She was also able to evaluate and treat an array of complex speech, language, voice, cognition and swallowing disorders. Because of this experience and the network she gained, Burton was able to land a highly sought-after clinical fellowship program at Henry Ford Hospital.

The EMU Simulation Lab provided Burton with the knowledge and confidence she needed to walk into a prestigious internship with the VA Medical Center ready to evaluate and treat patients. Since her job involves manipulating and working with tracheostomies and speaking valves, the hands-on experience was crucial to becoming a SLP.

While attending EMU from 2014-18, Burton received multiple scholarships—including the Anne Thorne Memorial Endowed Scholarship in SLP, the EMU Graduate Fellowship Scholarship and the Ann Demonet Endowed Scholarship in Special Education. These scholarships gave her a feeling of relief knowing it was lowering the cost of her education.

"EMU's COE holds a strong reputation for producing leaders in their fields and provides so many opportunities for students," said Burton, "From classes focused on diversity and disability, to scholarships and research opportunities, these experiences have allowed me to become a well-rounded professional."

Currently, the SLP department is considering adding a nasoendoscopy training lab to further prepare students and we are currently fundraising to add 2 training mannequins for future speech language pathologists to learn hands-on practices that impact vocal abilities. Our goal is to raise \$8,000 to cover the costs of this instructional equipment. Performing nasoendoscopy is a specialized skill that not many SLPs are able to achieve until years into their career, and they also have to pay thousands of dollars to complete training courses—as they are not offered often in the state of Michigan.

"Being able to provide a nasoendoscopy training lab at EMU would make students highly marketable in the field," said Burton. "Having one would put the school's SLP program at the top and also highly competitive in the nation."



Your donation to the Speech Language Program Fund will help us reach our goal of \$8,000 in order to purchase our training mannequins. Visit <https://www.emich.edu/foundation/give/index.php?fund=01691> to make your gift.

# Alumni Leads Culturally Responsive Math Initiatives Across 3 Counties

Jennifer Banks started the EMU Educational Studies program in summer 2010. She remembers feeling welcomed and supported from day one. Today, she's the math professional development facilitator for Washtenaw ISD, a regional educational service agency.

While a student in the Educational Studies department, Banks felt the coursework was engaging and relevant to her work as a classroom teacher, and now in her current role. Professors were intentional about building community and valued the skills and experiences she brought to the program.

"When I expressed that I was self-conscious about my writing, numerous professors encouraged me and reminded me I am a good writer," said Banks.

The network Banks created through her cohort turned out to be priceless. One classmate became her writing partner and together they supported each other in completing their dissertations. She also built invaluable relationships with several professors in her committee, each of whom gave her an opportunity to share and expand her research in various capacities after completing her degree.

In her work with the Tri-County Culturally Responsive Mathematics Institute—which ensures all learners not only have success with math but also come to see it as a tool to examine the world—Banks facilitates opportunities for teachers across three counties to help increase engagement and relevance of the subject for all students.

This past summer, 22 teachers worked with a team of 7 high school students and 3 preservice teachers to write culturally responsive math tasks to be piloted in their classrooms this semester. Researchers in the field will work the teams to support the development of high-quality culturally responsive tasks, and provide feedback on finalized tasks.

"Students expressed appreciation for this program and the opportunity to share their voices while engaging in mathematics," said Banks.

Banks encourages current Educational Studies students to focus their research on things they're passionate about, and to value and build relationships with people who will motivate and keep pushing them even when they want to give up.

"Commit to using your degree to make a meaningful change in the world."



To donate to the Educational Studies Doctoral Program Fund, please visit [emich.edu/give](https://emich.edu/give).



JENNIFER BANKS

## GIVE RISE

CAMPAIGN GOAL

**\$100  
MILLION**

**\$78 Million  
RAISED TO DATE**

## Donate to Give Rise: The Campaign

Give Rise: The Campaign for Eastern Michigan University is pushing toward a goal of \$100 million—our largest goal to date. The bold vision we have for our university demands that we give our students everything they need to succeed, and requires that we continue building our programs of distinction.

We must rise to every occasion for students from abroad, for students in need and for students who will lead the way to our future. Give Rise asks that we open doors to success, well beyond the boundaries of campus.

To give and learn more about Give Rise: The Campaign for Eastern Michigan University, visit [emugiverise.com](https://emugiverise.com).

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