

Statement of Concern Regarding Shared Governance and Decision Making at
Eastern Michigan University

Approved by Faculty Senate of Eastern Michigan University

April 11, 2018

Whereas **Eastern Michigan University** claims for itself the following Mission, Vision, and Core Values:

Mission

EMU enriches lives in a supportive, intellectually dynamic and diverse community. Our dedicated faculty balance teaching and research to prepare students with relevant skills and real world awareness. We are an institution of opportunity where students learn in and beyond the classroom to benefit the local and global communities.

Vision

Eastern Michigan University will be a premier public university recognized for student-centered learning, high quality academic programs and community impact.

Core values

Excellence: We provide an exceptional environment to our faculty, staff, and students. We improve our performance continuously and strive to be the best in everything we do.

Respect: We care for our people, communities and the environment and show respect for the dignity of the individual.

Inclusiveness: We create an environment that supports, represents, embraces and engages members of diverse groups and identities.

Responsibility: We are accountable – individually and in teams – for our behaviors, actions and results. We keep commitments.

Integrity: Integrity and transparency are critical to our institutional effectiveness. We pursue the highest level of personal, intellectual, academic, financial and operational integrity within the University community.

And whereas, in his July 12, 2016 Address to the Campus Community, “First Week on Campus” <https://www.emich.edu/president/communications/campusmessages/20160712.php>,

President James Smith acknowledges that “the best way to learn about this great university is to listen and learn from the people who are here and are part of our success”;

And whereas, in that same July 12, 2016 address, President Smith claims a commitment to the core values of the university when he says, “I look forward to working with you as we continue to create a new level of pride and recognition for our fine institution and for our outstanding faculty, our talented students, the supportive and caring staff and our outstanding alumni across the state, nation and around the world”;

And whereas, *despite* these past statements claiming support of the core values of the university and shared governance, President Smith has in his role as President of Eastern Michigan University consistently and repeatedly *failed* to abide by the very core values he has laid claim to, especially, but limited to, the core values of **RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, and INTEGRITY**;

And whereas, President Smith has repeatedly failed to “**pursue the highest level of personal, intellectual, academic, financial and operational integrity within the University community**” in the following measures that threaten the economic viability of Eastern Michigan University and its very **mission** and **vision** as “an institution of opportunity,” “recognized for student-centered learning, high quality academic programs and community impact”:

Despite having been elected by the board of regents on February 12, 2016, and despite the announcement on April 18, 2016 about significant budget challenges to the university by the Interim President of EMU, and despite joining the university two weeks after the announcement of the reduction of 40 staff positions (June 27, 2016), and despite President Smith’s *own claim* on July 12, 2016, to commit himself to shared governance and transparency,

President Smith has sought no systematic input from faculty or students on budget cuts that were required in the budget approved by the Board of Regents in June 2017.

Instead, in a gross misapplication of the observation by the Higher Learning Commission to right-size the university’s budget imbalance, President Smith enacted the mid-year layoffs of vital Eastern Michigan University staff--violating the core values of respect and inclusiveness by targeting vulnerable staff--an action that deprives students of the very contacts that help them to navigate their educations and our community. The absence of these staff members has the added detriment of leaving faculty and remaining staff less able to provide students with the sort of meaningful educational engagements that connect students to the life of the university, further eroding the university mission, vision, and core values.

Moreover, there has been no attempt by President Smith to communicate with Faculty Senate on the joint Student Government, Faculty Senate, and AAUP report on the financial burden from athletics and recommended cost savings. Instead, President Smith’s dissolution of four of our most vibrant and successful athletics teams further undercuts the university’s commitment to its student athletes, tarnishes our national reputation as a balanced comprehensive university, and ignores the major recommendations from students and faculty about the university’s commitment to the proper role of athletics at Eastern Michigan University.

Further, President Smith has also entered into a marketing contract with Academic Partners (AP) through secretive negotiations that by-passed input from faculty, students, and the Board of Regents, and that sacrifices half of student tuition to AP for marketing

services.

President Smith failed to appropriately respond to non-violent student protests following racist incidents on campus, which jeopardized student recruitment and retention.

President Smith entered into secretive negotiations to privatize parking services at EMU without any consultation with the Faculty Senate Budget and Resources Committee, the University Budget Council, and Faculty Senate.

And, President Smith has prepared to undertake a \$76 M bond issue to fund an athletic training facility \$20M, Sill Hall renovations \$40M, and REC/IM \$16M with no input from faculty input bodies. These projects are being undertaken after several years of EMU running significant budget deficits, and the projects will add an estimated \$3.5M per year in debt service to the operating budget making the need for budget cuts in other areas even greater. While the REC/IM will be funded by student fees approved by student government, the other two projects will impose great financial risks on EMU.

The Faculty Senate of Eastern Michigan University finds that in each of these instances, President Smith has significantly and repeatedly failed to uphold the core values of the university.

The Faculty Senate thus calls for President Smith to commit concretely to the university's core values:

to provide an exceptional environment to our faculty, staff, and students;
to care for our people, our communities, and our campus environment and show respect for the dignity of the individuals who work and study here;
to create an environment that supports, represents, embraces, and engages members of diverse groups and identities;
to hold himself accountable – individually and in teams – for the actions and results of his decisions;
to keep his commitments to students, faculty, and staff;
to the work of shared governance; and
to pursue and promote the highest level of personal, intellectual, academic, financial and operational integrity within the University community.

The Faculty Senate of Eastern Michigan University calls for President Smith to engage the senate directly before any new budget decisions, honoring both the spirit and practice of shared governance.