

President's Report  
**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**  
Board of Regents  
Dec. 9, 2021

Madam Chair and Distinguished Members of the Board of Regents:

I begin by thanking our guest speakers for sharing their thoughts and perspectives. I particularly want to acknowledge the individuals who bravely spoke on the matter of sexual assault.

As I have stated publicly numerous times, these allegations are serious and disturb me deeply as your President.

There is no place for sexual assault on or off our campus and we will continue to do everything in our power to prevent it from happening. We support the courageous survivors. Protecting students is critical to the University's educational mission. Our staff in law enforcement, Title IX, student affairs, and elsewhere work tirelessly every day to try to create a safe and supportive environment for students, faculty, and staff.

As I have noted, the University has engaged the external firm of [Cozen O'Connor](#), with which the University had no prior relationship, to review and audit our Title IX and related policies, procedures, and actions regarding these events. The report, when completed, will be shared with the campus community. We will undoubtedly be given recommendations about where we can do better; we will address those head-on.

Now I would like to speak to the resolution regarding student housing that was approved a short time ago.

When I arrived, EMU had been operating multi-million dollar deficits for years.

We had bled our reserves by \$60 million.

My charge from the Board was to reverse that unsustainable trend while also investing in our students and our future.

Since I arrived, we have:

- Balanced the budget;
- Invested in academic facilities and new programs;
- Increased financial reserves to address serious problems identified by accreditors with financial stability;
- Launched the new \$100 million GiveRise campaign with record-breaking years of fundraising; and,
- Navigated COVID-19 with among the lowest positivity rates of any Michigan public university.

However, one key area has not received significant attention: our student housing facilities.

Most are over 50 years old, and all but one are rated "poorly" in the facilities condition index.

This is significant, because:

- These facilities are home for thousands of our students for eight-to-nine months of the year;
- Approximately 40% of our housing residents are students of color; and,
- Technology matters now more than ever because people must be able to learn and work from home -- our student housing needs modern technology.

After decades of neglect, it's time to act. Doing nothing, or more delays, is irresponsible and the University has rejected that approach.

In light of that, a partnership is the best approach because, simply put, we do not have the capacity to either borrow or spend the significant amount of money needed.

That is not just our assessment-- our auditors have told us that, and the HLC, despite the recent very favorable report, continued to express concern about finances.

This conversation did not come out of the blue. It has been underway for many years and has been taking place in earnest with the faculty for over three years, dating back to September 2018.

We have engaged and listened to the Faculty Senate, the University Budget Council, and student government and, in numerous instances, we have accepted their recommendations.

But that extensive input process has come to a conclusion, and the University has carefully outlined our next steps and the reasons for it.

It is time to move forward. This is an exciting and transformative opportunity.

There is much work to be done with students and others on campus who will be involved in the process to design new facilities and upgrade our existing buildings.

I want to make clear that the University has never considered privatizing student housing, while others in our region clearly have. Under this plan, Eastern is working with an experienced partner that would provide the financing for new and renovated housing facilities on campus.

We are aware that some members of the University's Faculty Senate are concerned about these plans, and we plan to continue to work to clear up the misinformation. Under this plan:

- EMU will not be selling student housing facilities;
- EMU will continue to approve any housing rate increases;
- Residence life staff, such as RAs, will remain employed by EMU; and,
- EMU will continue to manage virtually all key aspects of the student housing experience.

My sincere wish is that our community joins in the celebration of what this plan means for our students, and for the University's future.

As I conclude, it is important to highlight a few additional items:

- You may note that I am wearing a WEMU lapel pin in addition to my EMU pin. This is in recognition of Lisa Barry, the station's talented afternoon host of All Things Considered who passed away suddenly last week. My thoughts are with her at home family and her radio station family. She will be terribly missed.
- I'd like to offer a hearty congratulations on behalf of the University to sophomore Synene (Sih-NEEN) Maria Abukader, who won \$100,000 for tuition at Sunday's Big Ten championship game. Synene is pursuing athletic training and is on the rowing team.
- Please join me in celebrating one of the best days of the year on campus; Commencement ceremonies take place on Sunday, Dec. 19. Congratulations to the more than 2,100 students who are eligible to graduate.
- Alumni, friends, faculty, staff and students came together for the University's annual day of giving, [#GIVINGTRUEDAY](#). Thanks to the support of more than 800 donors, Eastern Michigan raised more than \$2.2 million for a variety of scholarships, programs and services in a matter of 24 hours. It is EMU's greatest day of giving in its history.
- On Saturday, Dec. 11, I hope you can join us for George Gervin Day at the Convocation Center. Known as "The Iceman," Gervin began his road to NBA fame at Eastern Michigan. All employees are eligible for two free tickets, and additional tickets can be purchased for only \$7.60. GameAbove will donate \$100 to the Student Emergency Fund for every employee that attends the game. In addition, the first 1,000 students who attend will receive a \$75 Visa gift card, and three students will win a \$15,000 scholarship for the winter semester, thanks to GameAbove. Many other prizes are available. Please visit the EMU Athletics website for additional details.

Additional information and accomplishments are listed in the appendix to this report on the University website.

Thank you, Chair Jeffries.

James M. Smith, Ph.D.  
President

## Recognition

- **Makaiya Snead**, a student at Eastern pursuing a degree in Political Science, was among a select group of talented undergraduates from across the nation invited to attend the 21st annual **Public Policy Leadership Conference (PPLC)** presented by the **Harvard Kennedy School**.
- Eastern's **Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)** program was recently ranked among the best in the country by **U.S. News & World Report**. With over 694 BSN programs ranked nationally, EMU's BSN program ranked No. 138.
- Assistant Professor **Annemarie Kelly** and Associate Professor **Christina Marsack-Topolewski** from the **College of Health and Human Services** testified before the **Michigan House Judiciary Committee** in Lansing on Oct. 19, advocating for new state laws to protect vulnerable adults with disabilities against online exploitation, abuse, aggression, and bullying.
- The **Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide** recognized EMU alumna **Keri Dziuban's** contributions as an educator and board member at the Windhoek International School in Namibia. She is one of six winners of the **Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad**.

## Of Note

- Thanks to the support of 800 donors, EMU raised more than **\$2.2 million** for a variety of scholarships, programs, and services on **#GIVINGTRUEDAY**, making it the greatest day of giving in EMU history.
- The **School of Nursing** program received a **\$72,000 grant** provided by the **Michigan Department of Health and Human Services** to develop clinical simulation tools, including 360 degree videos and virtual reality simulation for nursing students to help improve patient care outcomes.
- Eastern Michigan University was selected as a **2021 Progress, Accomplishment, Thriving, Hope (PATH)** scholarship recipient through the **Ellucian Foundation**. EMU has received \$15,000 which will be distributed to 16 students.
- EMU's **Southeast Michigan Criminal Justice Policy Research Project (SMART)** has received a grant from the **Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan's (CFSEM) Community Policing Innovations Fund**. SMART will collaborate with Ann Arbor's Police Department and Independent Community Police Oversight Commission, the East Dearborn Downtown Development Association and the Eastern

Michigan University Public Safety Oversight Committee to help facilitate several community-led initiatives throughout the region. SMART will provide technical guidance and training assistance to the local groups to develop community-driven, substantive, and pragmatic changes in the way that policing and public safety services are provided by local law enforcement agencies.

- With funds raised from EMU alumni and community partners, the **EMU Center for Entrepreneurship** is launching a new program to help aspiring entrepreneurs jumpstart their ideas. The **Executive Certificate in Entrepreneurship** is a unique eight-week in-person and online hybrid program that offers business instruction, professional coaching, mentorship, networking and the chance for participants to pitch their startup ideas for one or two awards sharing a \$25,000 business expense fund.

## Events

- The **Michigan High School Esports League** will host their grand finals at the EMU Student Center on Dec. 11. More than 30 schools, including 121 teams, are participating in the first in-person esports championship event competing for three multiple-player strategy-based game titles.
- The **Celebration of Student Writing** event, a research and writing fair that showcases projects by more than 800 students enrolled this semester in WRTG121, was held on Dec. 2.
- **Chartwells** hosted the "**Thank-Ful**" event on Nov. 18 at the EMU Dining Commons, as part of a nationwide Thanksgiving event that took place at 300 U.S. colleges and university campuses. Chartwells also donated 500 meal vouchers to combat food insecurity on campus.
- The **College of Health and Human Services** virtually hosted more than 150 students and faculty from nine different CHHS programs during the **EMU Excellence in Interprofessional Education (IPE)** event on Nov. 12.
- The EMU **Center for Digital Engagement** presented a week of online digital marketing workshop panels with a special luncheon featuring **Brent Bowles**, vice president of Digital Marketing for Wells Fargo on Nov. 12.
- The **Fall Career Fair** for students and alumni, **hosted by University Career Services**, was held on Nov. 10.
- The 2021 **McAndless Professor Dr. Kenneth Boyle** presented a lecture on "History as Narrative: The 1960s." Drawing from his new book, Boyle traced the 1960s through the stories of the men and women who lived it, detailing the conflicts over race, war, and sex.

## Athletics

- Cross Country (Men): The EMU cross country team won its third consecutive **MAC Championship**. **Baldvin Magnusson** earned his first individual MAC title, placing first in the 8K race. Head Coach **Mark Rinker** was named MAC Cross Country Coach of the Year.
- Cross Country (Men): **Toby Gualter**, **Josh Hill**, and **Baldvin Magnusson** were named to the All-MAC First Team at the MAC Championships. **Chris Devaney** and **Andy Payne** were named All-MAC Second Team.
- Former EMU basketball and NBA legend **George "The Iceman" Gervin** was named to the **NBA 75th Anniversary Team**. The list features 76 players who have helped shape, define, and redefine the game of basketball.
- Football (Men): **Sidy Sow** was named to the **All-MAC First Team**. **Hassan Beydoun**, **Jake Julien**, and **Chad Ryland** earned **Second Team** honors.
- Football (Men): **Dylan Drummond** and **Mike Van Hoeven** earned **CoSIDA Academic All-District** honors. .
- Football (Men): **Hassan Beydoun** was nominated for 2021 **Burlsworth Trophy**. The Trophy is awarded to the most outstanding football player who began his career as a walk-on and has shown outstanding performance on the field.
- Volleyball (Women): **Raeven Chase** earned **All-MAC First Team** honors and **Samantha Basham** was named to the **All-MAC Second Team**.
- 86 percent of Eastern Michigan University student-athletes who enrolled as freshmen in 2014 graduated within a six-year window, according to the latest NCAA Graduation Success Rate. It marks the seventh straight year EMU has posted a GSR of 80-or-higher.
- EMU Football Associate Head Coach and Defensive Coordinator, **Neal Neathery**, was nominated for the 2021 **Frank Broyles Award**.

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