

President's Report  
**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**  
Board of Regents  
June 20, 2024

Chair Newton and Distinguished Members of the Board of Regents:

Today my President's Report will divert from its typical pathway; for the first time in eight years, I will speak about myself and my personal focus on the future. As all of you know, my contract as President ends almost exactly two years from today's date. It has been an absolute joy and fundamental honor to serve in this role, as President at EMU, for the eight years that have evolved and it will be (maybe even more so) for the remaining two years that stand before me and all of us. However, to paraphrase the words of U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson, "I shall not seek nor will I accept" another term as President.

Although it may seem odd to some that I make this statement today, I am acutely aware of the challenges and complex timelines required to find and install the next Eastern Michigan University president. That timeline, to be sure, is no less than 18 months in duration — I want those 18 months to be as productive as humanly possible and, thus, I make this declaration today.

Certainly, my plans beyond June 30, 2026 are not fully formed as of yet; the words "career transition", "next chapter", "retirement", "consulting", "lecturing", and "refocusing" are all swirling about. Obviously 24 months remain before the exact phase and course of action will need to be articulated. However, for now, I will simply pledge to all of you that I will work tirelessly to keep our University moving in a forward trajectory, our students in the forefront of all that we do, and our place in history for this 10 year timespan as president as positive and meaningful as it can be.

Connie and I are forever tied to this great institution. We are looking forward to the next two years on campus – and when my term is up we plan to stay engaged, even if from afar. We are and always will be TRUEMU! And, like many seated in this audience today, we are so very proud of the accomplishments that this superb executive team has been able to bring into existence.

Here are just a few examples:

- The most comprehensive reimagining, renovation and construction of new student housing in decades, with apartment-style spaces that meet the desires of today's students.
- The construction and expansion of Sill Hall – once the most non-technical appearing academic building on campus transformed into the state-of-the-art GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology.
- The expansive renovation of Strong Hall to provide a stronger foundation to our STEM curriculum, including geography, geology, physics and astronomy.
- The extensive facelift to the interior and exterior of the George Gervin GameAbove Center.
- The increased focus and resources committed to student physical and emotional well-being as evidenced by investments in the Rec/IM, the Community Behavioral Health Clinic, Counseling and Psychological Services, and a new campus health center.
- The expansion of Swoop's Food Pantry to help address food insecurity.
- The completion of the largest fundraising campaign in University history – Give Rise. Surpassing the goal of \$100 million and raising more than \$119 million for student scholarships, faculty support and academic program investments.
- The engagement of several key donors, such as GameAbove, the Windgate Foundation, the Halle Foundation and Jack Roush, chairman of Roush Enterprises.
- Investments in sustainability that are reducing our carbon footprint and earning us recognition in The Princeton Review's list of Green Colleges and the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.
- And, perhaps most importantly, through innovative projects and partnerships we have restored the University's financial platform to meet the requirements of accreditation bodies such as the Higher Learning Commission.

This is by no means intended to be a comprehensive list of the accomplishments directed by this leadership team – but it is a telling reminder of all that has taken place.

We are not ready to rest on laurels. Much work remains – and everyone in this room and watching our live stream today plays a part. As I stated earlier, I remain as committed as ever to furthering the work of this great institution as I enter my final two years as president. My plans are to work as hard for this institution on my last day of employment as I did on my first day in the year 2016!

The phrase “institution of opportunity,” embedded in the University’s mission statement, remains as relevant today as ever. This University has changed lives for the better for 175 years. We see it each and every day. That core principle will remain at the heart of the University for decades into the future. I extend my deep appreciation to our students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors and friends for your commitment and support. We are moving forward with great purpose and optimism in our service of students of all kinds, from all backgrounds, and with all levels of resources.

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

Thank you, Chair Newton.

James M. Smith, Ph.D.  
President

\* \* \* \* \*

- Doctoral student **NeDa Hayeri**, who is studying polymers and coatings technology, was selected for the **Best Student Paper Award** at the **Waterborne Coatings Symposium**.
- **Kyle Martin**, an environmental science major and track & field student-athlete, has been awarded a **Graduate Research Fellowship** by the **National Science Foundation** (NSF). Martin is the first student-athlete from EMU to receive this award and the fifth recipient overall from the university.
- Student-athletes **Kyle Martin** of the men's track and field program and **Anna Grace McCullough** of the gymnastics program were announced as the school's recipients of the 2024 **MAC Medal of Excellence Award**, which recognizes excellence in academics, athletics, service, and leadership.
- Second-year presidential scholar **Rowan Moxley** has been awarded the **Critical Language Scholarship** to study Chinese at **National Cheng Kung University** in Taiwan. The CLS program receives approximately 5,500 applications annually from across the country and only 500 of those applicants receive the scholarship.
- Senior and Ukrainian student **Lada Protcheva** earned the **EMU Undergraduate Research Stimulus** award with a fellowship of \$2,200 to support her research efforts for a project titled "Helping Pedestrians with Special Needs to Cross the Roads with an NAO Robot."
- The EMU Forensics team placed third in the **National Championship Tournament of the National Forensics Association** and earned a fourth-place finish at the **American Forensics Association National Speech Tournament**.
- The **Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board** recently selected one student and two faculty members from EMU as Fulbright finalists. Senior Presidential Scholar and psychology major **Rana Aabed** has been awarded the FLTA in Türkiye for 2024-2025. Secondary Education Mathematics professor, **Dr. Stephanie Casey**, has been awarded a Fulbright Open Study Research Award to continue her STEM education research at the University of Canberra in Australia in 2025. Mathematics professor, **Dr. Ovidiu Calin**, received a Fulbright Open Study Research Award to perform AI research at the University of Bucharest in Romania in 2024-2025.
- Associate professors **Annemarie Kelly** and **Christina Marsack-Toplewski** have been awarded the **Disability Advocacy Hall of Fame Award** by the **Arc of Oakland County Michigan**. The award recognizes compassion, determination, and resilience in support of Michigan's Justice for Allie Law.

- The **Michigan Dance Council** awarded Professor **Sherry Wilkinson** the **Dance Educator of the Year in Higher Education** award, a testament to her longstanding commitment to the dance program.
- Eastern awarded **Summer Research and Creativity Awards** to faculty members allowing them to dedicate themselves to research, creative endeavors, and scholarly pursuits that will ultimately benefit students and advance their fields. **Eric Acton, Brittany Albaugh, Sadaf Ali, Yvonne Allsop, Peter Blackmer, Leslie Blome, Nancy bryk, Meriam Caboral-Stevens, Anne Casper, Rui Chen, Margeaux Claude, Deb Crawford, Ryan English, Bradley Ensor, Robert Erlewine, Jason Ferguson, Maria Luz Garcia, yunguo Guan, Ron Halpern, Naomi Hasimoto, Jeromy Hopgood, Christine Hume, Raed Jarrah, Melissa Jones, Noel Koller-Ditto, You Li, Andrew Mansfield, Inae Oh, Margaret Ann Paauw, Jenni Putz, Meriah Sage, Ken Saldanha, Matthew Schaffer, Rita Shah, Ourania Spantidi, Julie Stone Rupp, Jessica Swan, Christina Topolewski, Chuyang Yang, and Mehmet Yaya** received awards.
- Eastern's part-time MBA program has been named 47th among the nation's **Best Part-Time MBA Programs** by **Fortune**, climbing seven spots from last year.
- For the seventh year in a row Eastern has been ranked **first in the state of Michigan** and **ninth in the U.S.** for being one of the most military and veteran-friendly universities by **Military Friendly**.
- For the second year in a row **89.1 WEMU** was named **Station of the Year, Public Radio Group One** by the **Michigan Association of Broadcasters**.

#### Of Note

- A **\$6.5 million** commitment from **GameAbove** to the EMU Department of Athletics reflects the belief in the potential of EMU's **men's and women's golf programs** to achieve greatness. This commitment brings GameAbove's total support for EMU Golf to over \$14.5 million, marking the greatest level of support from a single donor to one sport in the University's history.
- EMU is partnering with Ann Arbor company **Coherix** to launch a new program within EMU's GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology. The partnership aims to create "factory-of-the-future" manufacturing technology using a **\$385,000 grant** from Coherix, allowing more than 70 mechanical engineering students to work with leading technology for three years. Both graduate and undergraduate students will be eligible to participate.
- The **National Park Service** awarded EMU a **\$75,000 grant** as a part of the **Historic Preservation Fund's African American Civil Rights grant program**. The funds will empower efforts to identify and safeguard sites on Detroit's east side vital to the African American struggle for equality.

- Eastern's emphasis on growing **academic research and scholarly activity** is opening the doors to a greater level of research activity among the University's faculty. From 2022 to 2023, externally-funded research grew 20%, from \$14.8 million to \$17.8 million. The University also increased the number of sponsored research awards from 110 in 2022 to 127 in 2023.
- The collegiate chapter of the **Women in Aviation** (WAI) traveled to Orlando, Florida to attend the 35th Annual Conference. Students participated in the convention to expand their reach as a collegiate chapter, acquire internships, and establish connections with others who share a similar passion for the aviation industry.
- The **EMU Rowing Course at Ford Lake** was unveiled on April 26. This landmark event, funded through a groundbreaking partnership with Destination Ann Arbor, the Marriott Eagle Crest, and the Charter Township of Ypsilanti, heralds a new chapter for EMU athletics and the entire community. With its state-of-the-art infrastructure, including a semi-permanent buoyed 2,000-meter course and eight competition lanes, the facility is primed to host regional, national, and international rowing events.
- The **'Walk to Freedom' Exhibit**, originally displayed at the EMU Student Center Gallery, has been moved to its permanent residency at the Honors College. The immersive display features a Lego mosaic and photo boards depicting the historic 1963 Walk to Freedom event in Detroit. Biology professor **Dr. Aaron Liepman** created his fourth civil rights-themed LEGO mosaic.
- Food insecurities and how they affect college students is the subject of the May episode of **"Enlighten U,"** a mental health podcast for students. The podcast can be found on EMU's YouTube channel and is available from podcast services.
- EMU is taking significant steps to address the gender gap in computer science by introducing high school girls to computer programming and the rapidly expanding set of occupations related to the field. Following a successful first year, EMU will host the **Gigabytes Summer Computing Camp**, an all-day, week-long program, from July 22 through July 26.

## Events

- The Department of **Africology and African American Studies** presented a special Zoom-based lecture titled "Why Juneteenth Matters," featuring speaker **Mark Fancher, Esq.** on June 19.

- The **EMU Public Safety team** held its annual **Bike Rodeo** for the Ypsilanti community on June 15. Participants learned about safety, had helmet fittings and mechanical checks, and received giveaways.
- The **TRUEMU Night with the Detroit City Football Club** was held on June 15 at Keyworth Stadium. Tickets included a DCFC/EMU scarf and a \$5 donation to the EMU Student Emergency Fund.
- In a display of friendly competition, a few hundred students from grades first through eight gathered at Eastern's campus on May 30 for the annual **Math Challenge**. Central Academy in Ann Arbor took home the first-place elementary school trophy, while Riverside Academy clinched the middle school trophy. The challenge is hosted by **EMU's Charter Schools** office.
- **Marvin Skipper**, EMU alumnus and former all-star basketball prospect, has turned a challenging heart condition into a mission to serve underprivileged youth in Detroit through his non-profit organization, **Youth Are Bigger Than Life**. His inaugural Youth Are Bigger Than Life Charity Comedy Show to support Detroit youth was held on May 25.
- The **EMU football program** continued one of its most impactful traditions on May 22 as the Eagles played host to over 225 members of the community for the annual installment of **Victory Day at EMU**. The event welcomed cognitive and physically impaired community members from five different counties to take part in a day of football activities with the EMU student-athletes, coaches, and staff.
- More than 250 students from across southeast Michigan showcased their place-based environmental stewardship projects during the **Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition's (SEMIS Coalition) Annual Community Forum** at EMU on May 21.
- The **EMU Theatre** presented a world premiere staged reading of "**Cause Play**," authored by EMU alumna Shavonne Coleman on May 10-11.
- The **Center of Race and Ethnicity** held its annual **Multicultural Celebration Ceremony** on April 26 to recognize the achievements of graduating students of color.
- The **School of Music and Dance** held an **Honors Music Recital** which featured some of its best and brightest music students in solo and small group performances on April 18.
- The **EMU Wind Symphony** held its annual **Spring Concert** on April 14.

- The **Japanese Student Association** hosted a **Japanese Spring Festival** with demos & hands-on sessions of Sado, Kendo, Shodo, Ikebana, Origami, and Study Abroad Consultations on April 13.

## Athletics

- Baseball (Men): **Nick Chittum, Logan Hugo, Blake McRae, Glenn Miller, and Cory Taylor** earned **College Sports Communicators Academic All-District** distinctions.
- Baseball (Men): **Bobby Jones** was named to the **All-MAC Second Team**.
- Golf (Women): **Natai Apicholati, Alyssa DiMarcantonio, Anna Watson, and Paige Zolciak** have earned **2024 Academic All-MAC Team** distinctions.
- Golf (Men): **Cam Kellett** secured an exemption to play in the **2024 RBC Canadian Open** and set a new course record during the **Canadian National Open Championship**.
- Golf (Men): **Cam Kellett** and **Nathaniel Gray Lamont** earned **2024 Academic All-MAC Team** distinctions.
- Gymnastics (Women): **Cassie Bergin, Raisa Boris, Ella Chemotti, Alana Fisher, Jordan Jankowski, Kyrie Lowe, Trinity Macy, Anna Grace McCullough, and Molly Parris** were named to the **Academic All-MAC** team.
- Lacrosse (Women): **Sydney Lawrence** was named the **MAC Defensive Player of the Year** and **Maddie Porter** was named the **MAC Freshman of the Year**. **Mackenzie Blackwell** and **Sydney Lawrence** were honored as **All-MAC First Team**, and **Karly Low** and **Maddie Porter** garnered **All-MAC Freshman Team** honors. **Abby Alderman** and **Kelsea Dague** were named to the **MAC All-Tournament Team**.
- Lacrosse (Women): **Abby Alderman, Amber Alderman, Caitlin Beahm, Mackenzie Blackwell, Samantha Borgert, Gina D'Alessio, Kelsea Dague, Tracy Grollman, Skylar Hilmer, Haley Hodak, Sydney Lawrence, Avery Schwab, and Annika Wozney** have been named **Academic All-MAC**.
- Rowing (Women): **Laura Borchers, Olivia Bray, Kat Childs, Reagan Fazekas, Delani Fisher, Megan Fowler, Olivia Hansen, Kaycee Johnson, Jessica LaRoy, Christina Lin, Julia Maxwell, Anna Old, Carly Summers, Ella Warrick, Lily Wilhelm, Emma Wyss, and Abigail Zola** were named **CRCA National Scholar-Athletes**.
- Tennis (Women): **Sabina Brichackova, Andrea Quiroz, and Prerna Vichare** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.

- Tennis (Women): **Sabina Brichackova, Linda Eloundou, Andrea Quiroz, Daniella Shved,** and **Prerna Vichare** were named to the **College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team.**
- Tennis (Women): **Daniella Shved** was named to the **All-MAC First Team** for the second year in a row.
- Track & Field (Women): The women's team placed second in the **MAC Outdoor Championships.** **Kyra Buffen** was named **First Team All-MAC.** **Esme Davies, Alyson Davis, Paige Marchant, Josephine Oloye, Saraiah Walkes,** and **Makiya Worthy** earned **Second Team All-MAC** honors.
- Track & Field (Women): **Kyra Buffen, Miranda Cadwell, Esme Davies,** and **Anita Zaro** participated in the **NCAA East First Round** regionals.
- Track & Field (Women): **Esme Davies** set a **new school record** in the 10,000m, at the Wake Forest Invitational on April 19.
- Track & Field (Women): **Isabella Brent, Natalie Buratczuk, Miranda Cadwell, Esme Davies, Alyson Davis, Elise Gregory, Tijana Japundzic, Aleah Johnson, Maura Lane, Marta Moreno, Chloe Musta, Maleah Scott, Fleur van der Linden, Tabatha Walford, Saraiah Walkes, Cara Weber,** and **Safeya Woolcock** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Track & Field (Men): **Ronald Brandal, Ryan Johnson, Marcus Kemp, Kayenn Mabin, Jake McEachern, Formula Thompson,** and **Almighty Williamson** will participate in the **NCAA East First Round** regionals.
- Track & Field (Men): **Linus Vennemann** won the 3,000m Steeplechase event at the **MAC Outdoor Championships.** **Almighty Williamson** was named **Men's Most Co-Outstanding Track Performer.** **Ryan Johnson, Alexander Thompson, Linus Vennemann,** and **Almighty Williamson** were named **First Team All-MAC.** **Ronald Brandal, Jake McEachern,** and **Gabriel Singh** were named **Second Team All-MAC.** The men's team placed third in the championship.
- Track & Field (Men): **Ronnie Brandal, Brendan Hill, Kyle Martin, Brady Messer, Sam Peterson, Linus Vennemann,** and **Almighty Williamson** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Student-athletes set a **school record with a 3.430 cumulative GPA** for the Winter 2024 semester. It was also the 29th consecutive semester of earning higher than a 3.0 cumulative grade-point average.

- The men's cross country, men's golf, and women's tennis teams posted **perfect 1,000 multi-year rates** in the latest **NCAA Academic Progress Rate (APR)** report. Eleven of EMU's sports posted multi-year scores equal to or better than the 2021-22 report.
- The EMU Department of Athletics, in partnership with Teamworks Influencer, has launched **The Eastern NIL Exchange**, a platform that will complement the department's NIL program and help EMU student-athletes maximize their Name, Image, and Likeness opportunities.

###