

President's Report
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Board of Regents
June 26, 2025

Chairman Ford and Distinguished Members of the Board of Regents,

This month, the spirit of the season has been unmistakable -- energizing our campus with celebrations that reflect the very heart of who we are. Most notably, we've honored Pride Month and Juneteenth, two occasions that invite both celebration and reflection. These moments underscore our identity as a university committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community for all.

Today, I am pleased to recommend for approval a General Fund operating budget of \$321.5 million for the 2025–26 fiscal year. This budget is more than a financial plan -- it's a statement of values. It reflects our steadfast focus on academic excellence and expanding student opportunity.

At Eastern, access is not just a goal -- it's a commitment. Roughly 68% of all EMU students, and an impressive 90% of first-year students, receive financial aid. Our Eastern Tuition Advantage scholarship, for example, offers free undergraduate tuition to students with a 3.0 GPA and a household income below \$60,000. Paired with programs like the Presidential Scholarship and the 4WARD Graduation Scholarship, we are removing financial barriers and opening doors to brighter futures.

Even amidst rising operational costs and shifting state support, our priorities remain unchanged: student success and a high-quality, inclusive academic experience.

As part of that continued excellence, we're delighted to welcome two new deans to EMU, whose appointments were just confirmed through the consent agenda:

- Dr. Amy Hietapelto will begin her role as dean of the College of Business on July 16. She brings over two decades of leadership experience and comes to us from the University of Minnesota Duluth, where she served as dean of the Labovitz School of Business and Economics.
- Dr. Carol Bishop Mills will join us August 1 as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Most recently associate dean for Faculty Success at Florida Atlantic University, she has also led the School of Communication and Multimedia Studies there.

Their arrivals mean we must also extend heartfelt gratitude and best wishes to Deans Dana Heller and Tom Traynor, who are retiring after distinguished tenures at EMU. On behalf of the entire university community, we thank them for their enduring impact.

Turning to recent accomplishments, I'm proud to highlight achievements that exemplify the vibrancy of our academic community:

- 22 faculty members are being recommended for sabbatical leave, supporting research and creative pursuits across a wide range of disciplines.
- 43 faculty members are receiving Faculty Research and Creative Activity Fellowships, granting them time to advance projects that promise future scholarship and external funding.
- Assistant Professor Matthew Kautz was awarded a prestigious National Academy of Education/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship for his research on school discipline.
- Professors Aesha Mustafa and Kimberley Barker will take part in the inaugural TEDx Ypsilanti, scheduled for tomorrow.
- Students Nicholas Mullaney and Aspenn Armstrong have been selected as Fulbright English Teaching Fellowship finalists, joining an elite group from over 4,000 applicants. Nicholas will head to Germany; Aspenn to Thailand.
- Students Kelly Crank and Victoria MacLean are recipients of the Gilman Scholarship, supporting international study for Pell Grant recipients. Kelly will study in Japan, Victoria in Costa Rica.
- Our Forensics Team earned an impressive third-place national finish at April's NFA National Tournament, outpacing peers from over 50 institutions, including Berkeley and Rice.
- The student-led Baja Racing Club returned to national competition with distinction, placing second among Michigan colleges at this year's SAE event in Maryland -- edging out teams from Michigan State, Lawrence Tech, and others.

You can find additional details on these highlights *at* EMU Today, with more accomplishments listed in the appendix to this report on the University's website.

Thank you, Chairman Ford, for your continued partnership.

James M. Smith, Ph.D.
President

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Recognition

- Honors College students **Trinity Perkins** and **Jeanne Sandouno** have been named **Ford Motor Company Fund John Dingell Fellows** and selected to participate in **The Washington Center's Academic Internship Program**.
- **Jason Folk**, an Honors College student pursuing a double major in philosophy and communications, was selected for the **2025 Student Voting Honor Roll** by the **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge**. Folk also served on the Michigan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force.
- EMU's **Game Design program** ranked No. 16 in the Midwest and No. 3 in Michigan in the **2025 Game Design School Rankings** by **Animation Career Review**.
- **Heather Hutchins-Wiese**, professor and co-director of the Dietetics and Human Nutrition program, is leading a regional sustainability initiative aimed at reducing food waste in Southeast Michigan. Through a collaboration with **Make Food Not Waste**, a Detroit-based nonprofit, she is helping six major Metro Detroit cities—Southfield, Dearborn, Livonia, Farmington Hills, Westland, and Canton—develop comprehensive food waste prevention blueprints tailored to their communities.

Of Note

- EMU is revolutionizing health education for young leaders with the launch of **Way Forward@EMU**, an innovative initiative supported by a **\$1,016,850 grant** from the **Toyota Way Forward Fund**. Designed to empower high school students from Ypsilanti, Wayne/Westland, and Romulus, the program bridges health education with career readiness, equipping participants with tools to drive real community impact.
- EMU's **APEX (Atmospheric Physics Experiment)** students are taking science to new heights. In collaboration with teams across the country, EMU students **Joud Bahemriz, Nathan Guerra, and Isaac Thompson** recently launched a high-altitude weather balloon as part of a national initiative to measure changes in galactic cosmic rays during periods of heightened solar activity. The mission aimed to study a rare event known as the Forbush Decrease—a dip in galactic cosmic rays caused when a coronal mass ejection from the sun disrupts the Earth's magnetic field. APEX is a NASA-funded project to make atmospheric measurements from high-altitude weather balloons during solar eclipses.

- How optimism and positivity can enhance our lives has been the recent subject of the “**Enlighten U,**” a mental health podcast for students. The podcast can be found on EMU's YouTube channel and is available from podcast services.

Events

- EMU will host **TRUEMU Night with the Lansing Lugnuts** on June 26. Attendees received a co-branded Lugnuts/Eastern Michigan hat. Every ticket also included a \$5 donation to the Student Emergency Fund.
- **Halle Library** invites students, faculty, and art enthusiasts to embark on a journey through time with the launch of a new exhibit, the Wigglesworth Collection, from May-August 8.
- The Department of **Africology and African American Studies** commemorated Juneteenth with a panel discussion, “**The Future of Black Politics in America Revisited,**” on June 19. Panelists included **Eric Brown, Mark Francher, Robyn Mccoy, and Charles Simmons.**
- Students and staff from the **Honors College** volunteered at the **Farms at Trinity Health** on June 12.
- A reception for the NIH-funded study exhibit titled, “**Through Their Eyes: Understanding Factors Salient to Firearm Violence in Asian American Communities,**” was held on May 22. The exhibit was on display at the Farmington Hills Library from May 3-31.
- **WEMU Radio** held its annual yard sale on May 21. Patrons were able to purchase shirts, hoodies, mugs, CDs, and other items at discounted rates to support the station.
- Eastern hosted the annual **Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition (SEMIS) Community Forum** on May 19. The event brought together students, educators, and community members from across southeast Michigan to showcase student-led place-based learning projects and foster meaningful discussions on community engagement.
- EMU hosted **TRUEMU Night with the Detroit Tigers** on May 12. Attendees received a co-branded Tigers/Eastern Michigan hat. Every ticket also included a \$5 donation to the Student Emergency Fund.
- The **Girls on the Run 5K** event was held on campus in the Green Lot on May 3. Local girls from grades 3-5 completed a year-long program with volunteer coaches that was focused on life skill development, physical activity, and friendships.

- The **EMU Planetarium** presented “The Little Star That Could” on April 25.

Athletics

- Baseball (Men): **Dom Anderson, Drew Beckner, Logan Hugo, Bobby Jones, Brendan Kleiman, Cooper Vance, and Giano Zuccaro** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Baseball (Men): **Drew Beckner** earned **MAC Baseball Championship Team** honors. **Drew Beckner and Logan Hugo** were named to the **CSC Academic All-District team**.
- Baseball (Men): **Drew Beckner, Logan Hugo, Tyler Kapa, Brendan Kleiman, and Drew Norris** earned **All-MAC Second Team** honors.
- Basketball (Women): **Elena Cabello, Kyndal Lewis, and Olivia Westphal** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Football (Men): **Jefferson Adam, Blake Bustard, Blake Daniels, Jere Getzinger, Donovan Green, Hans Lillis, Luke Murphy, Kendric Nowling, Broderick Roman, Quentavius Scandrett, Cole Snyder, and Joey Zelinsky** were named to the **NFF Hampshire Honor Society**.
- Golf (Women): For the first time in program history, **Savannah de Bock** was selected as an individual qualifier for the **NCAA Columbus Regional**.
- Golf (Women): **Riley Kim** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Golf (Women): **Savannah de Bock** earned **All-MAC First Team** honors, and **Mariana Vega** was named **All-MAC Second Team**.
- Golf (Men): **Rory McDonald-O'Brien** finished **second in the MAC Men's Golf Championship**. The team finished third in the championship.
- Lacrosse (Women): The Eagles finished the regular season in a three-way tie for the **MAC Conference title**. **Mackenzie Blackwell** was named **MAC Attacker of the Year**, and **Maddie Porter** earned the **MAC Goalkeeper of the Year** honor.
- Lacrosse (Women): **Abby Alderman, Amber Alderman, Caitlin Beahm, Mackenzie Blackwell, Samantha Borgert, Kyleigh Dill, Tracy Grollman, Haley Hodak, Roya Khaleeli, Karly Low, Kendall Nagle, Maddie Porter, Avery Schwab, and Annika Wozney** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.

- Tennis (Women): **Sabina Brichackova, Regina Mendez, Kseniia Saenko, and Prerna Vichare** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Tennis (Women): **Sabina Brichackova, Marta Komar, and Prerna Vichare** earned **SCS Academic All-District** honors.
- Tennis (Women): **Daniella Shved** earned **All-MAC First Team** honors, and **Prerna Vichare** was named **All-MAC Second Team**.
- Track & Field Indoor (Women): **Isabella Brent, Natalie Buratczuk, Sophie Emin, Kiera Hansen, Tijana Japundzic, Aleah Johnson, Nyla Joseph-Guevara, Nicolette Lewis, Marta Moreno, Chloie Musta, Eva Orlich, Laisette Rachal, Megan Rybitski, Julia Sabo, Maleah Scott, Saraiah Walkes, Cara Weber, Mariia Yelanska, and Anita Zaro** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Track & Field Outdoor (Women): **Isabella Brent, Micah Martin, and Saraiah Walkes** qualified for the **NCAA Division I Championships First Round competitions**.
- Track & Field Outdoor (Women): **Demetria Henderson, Sofia Ivanko, Josephine Oloye, and Saraiah Walkes** were named **All-MAC First Team**.
- Track & Field Outdoor (Women): **Sofia Ivanko** took the **gold in the 10,000m event** in the **MAC Outdoor Championships**. **Saraiah Walkes** was named **Most Valuable Performer**, and won both the **100m and 200m Dashes**. The **4x400m relay team** of **Mia Biehl, Demetria Henderson, Josephine Oloye, and Saraiah Walkes** took **first place** in their event. The **4x100m relay team** of **Ajah Arscott, Alimot Alowonle, Jaeden Garraway, and Saraiah Walkes** took **second** in their event. **Josephine Oloye** placed **second** in the **400m Dash**, **Kyra Buffen** earned **silver** in the **Triple Jump**, and **Micah Martin** placed **second** in the **High Jump**. The **women's team** placed **second** in the **championship**.
- Track & Field Indoor (Men): **Ronan Codyre, Lachlan Cornelius, Cason Doolittle, Brendan Hill, Drew Knieper, Carson McCoy, Jake McEachern, Tajay Roberts, Gabe Singh, and Kian Wiles** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Track & Field Outdoor (Men): **Lucky Fiaku, Brendan Hill, Jake McEachern, Gabe Singh, and Kian Wiles** qualified for the **NCAA Division I Championships First Round competitions**.
- Track & Field Outdoor (Men): **Bamidele Ajayi, Shelton Bass, Mill Coleman III, Lachlan Cornelius, George Gage, Solomon King, Jake McEachern, Olawole Olanrewaju, Tajay Roberts, Gabe Singh, and Kian Wiles** were named **All-MAC First Team**.

- Track & Field Outdoor (Men): **Jake McEachern** took the **gold in the Hammer Throw**, **Kian Wiles won the 100m** event in the **MAC Outdoor Championships**, and **Drew Knieper** placed **second in the Javelin event**. The **4x100m relay team of Shelton Bass, Mill Coleman III, George Gage, and Solomon King won the gold** in their event. The **4x400m relay team of Bamidele Ajayi, Shelton Bass, Olawole Olanrewaju, and Tajay Roberts also won the gold** in their event. **Lachlan Cornelius placed first in the 800m finals**, and **Gabe Singh won the 400m Hurdles**. **Silver medals** were awarded to **Formula Thompson in the Triple Jump**, and **Brendan Hill in the High Jump**.
- Student-athletes **Raisa Boris (gymnastics)** and **Logan Hugo (baseball)** were honored with **MAC Medal of Excellence Awards**.
- EMU student-athletes set a school record with a 3.472 cumulative GPA following the Winter 2025 semester. It was also the 31st consecutive semester of earning higher than a 3.0 cumulative GPA.