

President's Report
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Board of Regents Meeting
June 18, 2020

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Board of Regents:

We have covered many important topics this morning and afternoon, and with my report a short time ago about the University's response to COVID-19 and the continuing and ongoing efforts to support our surrounding community, I will keep my remarks relatively brief.

The Steering Committee overseeing the return to in-person operations this fall continues to move forward in its planning and oversight of this massive undertaking. Our "new normal" will require an entirely different approach to the start of fall classes – with issues and operations that are unlike any we have seen before.

As just one example of this broad effort, Associate Provost Jim Carroll shared with us this week the detailed work that is underway in terms of classroom configuration to maintain physical distancing. Utilizing faculty and students in the Geographic Information Science programs – or GIS – as we refer to it, the mapping of classrooms of all shapes and sizes is underway. Think about the number of classrooms we have on campus and you get a sense of the scope of this single element of the operational challenges we are addressing. Seating configurations are being plotted for each classroom. Layouts that include empty seats between one another, empty rows of seats, and the moving of classes to larger spaces.

We are deeply involved in planning the communications and the sharing of information about our changed operations this fall – this will involve ongoing messages to new and returning students, their parents, and our faculty and staff. It is vitally important in this process that we create an understanding of the shared community aspect of this undertaking, how every one of us – administrators, faculty, staff and students -- have a critical role to play in keeping our community safe by wearing masks, practicing effective hand washing, and maintaining physical distance from one another.

We are looking forward to sharing the impressive initial work of the Public Health Work Group and its preliminary recommendations surrounding the return to in-person operations. In a short period of time, the Work Group has conducted extensive research, explored best practices, and is developing recommendations specific to the needs of our University and students, faculty and staff.

An initial presentation to the campus community will take place next Tuesday, June 23 by way of two 90-minute virtual town hall meetings. At 8:30 a.m., faculty are invited to participate. A session has been scheduled at 1 p.m. for staff. Log-in details for the meetings are posted on the University calendar.

We understand and appreciate that there are many questions about what fall will look like. We plan to answer as many questions as we can, while also understanding that there remain many questions for which more work has to be done. We ask for your patience as we work through the many, many issues ahead.

I am proud of our campus community's ongoing efforts to speak out against racism, discrimination and intolerance affecting our Black citizens. Several individuals, departments and organizations on campus have been voices for change and justice. Those statements can be found on the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion website](#). This is the (thee) important conversation for our campus in the coming months. If you have not seen it yet, I encourage you to view the video "[EMU Standing Against Injustice](#)" from the Faculty Senate Task Force on Campus Climate, Race and Diversity, on behalf of the Faculty Senate. It powerfully captures the concerns, fears, hopes and plans for action among many in our campus community.

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

Thank you, Chairman Webb.

James M. Smith, Ph.D.
President

Recognition

- **Tony Kurek**, a full-time lecturer in Accounting, has been named the recipient of the **Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants 2020 Accounting Teaching Excellence Award**.
- The EMU **Women of Excellence awards** were announced in April. The Women of Excellence Awards student recipients were **Krystol Aplert, Rebecca Lee, and Hannah Redigan** and staff recipients were **Caroline Sanders** and **Elise Buggs Sturdivant**. Recipients of Women of Excellence Scholarships were **Abigail Bick, Ayla Brooks, Maha Casey, Heidi Daugherty, Kimberly Dixson-Ferrell, Michaela Foster, Danisha Grier, Ismet Tabassum Khan, Kari Klavon, Kai Le, Jalissa Long-Jolley, Deyza Marshall, Zariah Montgomery, and Lauren Smith**.

Of Note

- EMU spring graduates were able to participate in a **digital media experience to celebrate commencement**. Graduates, their families, fellow students, faculty, staff, and alumni were able to short video messages to offer their congratulations. EMU will host a traditional in-person ceremony for the new graduates at a later date.
- Gen.G, a global esports organization, and EMU announced a **multi-year esports program** to attract new students, and connect enrolled students, faculty, and alumni, to build a community on campus for gamers to compete and share their passion. The program will include a Futures Program, High School Invitational, and Women in Gaming Summer Camp.
- EMU and Ypsilanti Community Schools are collaborating on an initiative to **increase Internet access** for hundreds of families in the school district. EMU facilitated a partnership with Comcast's Internet Essentials (IE) program with financial backing from the GameAbove Foundation and the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development.
- The **Bright Futures** program at EMU is combining academic activities, nutrition instruction, and local fresh produce in a special project to benefit families in the Ypsilanti Community Schools district. The partnership includes Bright Futures, the Farm at St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor Hospital, Growing Hope, Ypsilanti Community Schools, and the extension office at Michigan State University.

Events

- The EMU **Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology** department hosted a virtual **public forum** on the social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on May 27.
- The **Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition**, led by **Ethan Lowenstein**, professor of Teacher Education, held an online **Community Forum** on May 18 with a structured dialogue that maximized the collective intelligence of the group through the inclusion of diverse perspectives and approaches.
- Engage @ EMU offered **free virtual mini-camps** for all ages from April 20 – May 18. Topics for the camps included ecology, zoology, digital design, Dungeons and Dragons, screenwriting, theater, eSports, coding, robotics, and more.

Athletics

- Golf (Women): The women's golf team was recognized with an **NCAA Public Recognition Award** for excellence in academic achievement, for the fourth time in five years.
- Golf (Men): The men's golf team was recognized with an **NCAA Public Recognition Award** for excellence in academic achievement.
- Gymnastics (Women): **Jada Rondeau** and **Caitlin Satler** were named as **MAC Distinguished Scholar Athletes** for excellence in athletics and academics.
- Gymnastics (Women): **Emili Dobronics** was named to the **CoSIDA Academic All-District Women's At-Large Team**.
- Swimming & Diving (Women): **Ali Staver** and **Sophia Tsafantakis** were named as **MAC Distinguished Scholar Athletes** for excellence in athletics and academics.
- Track & Field (Women): **Brittni Mason** and **Alysse Wade** were named as **MAC Distinguished Scholar Athletes** for excellence in athletics and academics.
- Track & Field (Men): **Owen Day**, **Derek Jones**, and **Owen Richardson** were named as **MAC Distinguished Scholar Athletes** for excellence in athletics and academics.
- Volleyball (Women): The women's volleyball team was recognized with an **NCAA Public Recognition Award** for excellence in academic achievement, for the eighth straight year.

- **MAC Medal of Excellence Awards** were presented to **Aubrey Martin** (women's soccer) and **Sean Beckom II** (men's track & field) for excellence in academics, athletics, leadership, and service.
- All of EMU's 18 teams had multi-year **Academic Progress Rates (APR)** of 955 or higher, well above the NCAA's minimum score of 930, as reported in the NCAA's latest report. The baseball, women's cross country, women's golf, men's golf, women's gymnastics, and volleyball teams posted perfect scores. The football, women's golf, men's golf, women's soccer, and volleyball teams posted their best multi-year rates ever.
- EMU student-athletes posted its **highest semester and cumulative GPA average in school history**, with a 3.516 winter semester GPA and a cumulative 3.332 GPA.

* * * * *