

President's Report
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Board of Oct. 22, 2020

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

In the midst of what has been one of the most challenging, difficult and volatile crises this nation has ever faced, Eastern Michigan University has worked diligently over the past nine months to establish a supportive, operationally sound and multi-faceted approach to the pandemic. Since the beginning of the crisis, our institutional response has been guided by a singular unwavering focus – protecting the health, safety and well-being of our community while continuing to provide the high quality education that prepares students with the skills and real-world awareness that are necessary for success.

The most visible evidence of the University's aggressive and comprehensive response is apparent in the low number of positive COVID-19 cases among our students, faculty and staff. This is particularly significant when compared to the positive cases at many other universities in Michigan.

In the seven days ending Oct. 20, the University administered 840 tests that resulted in zero positive tests. Since August 12, the University has administered a total of 5,676 tests that resulted in 46 positive results for a positivity rate of 0.81 percent.

The data is updated regularly on the University's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

We have expanded our testing to more effectively monitor the campus environment, consistent with our late August announcement to delay residence hall move-in and begin the semester in a fully virtual/online format in order to develop a more robust testing process.

In addition, the University has engaged in a highly innovative process to identify biomarkers of COVID-19 in the wastewater from most of our residence halls. Wastewater surveillance is a fast-evolving science. It is providing an additional layer of information in the University's ongoing monitoring and response processes.

The faculty and staff expertise involved in the University's response to COVID-19 has been extraordinary and invaluable. Time does not permit me to acknowledge the many individuals who guide our efforts, but allow me this moment to thank you for all that you are doing to keep our community safe.

I announced to the University Community on Sept. 10 that I had appointed a Committee to gather information and to provide guidance to me around the names currently given to the Quirk Building and Quirk Theatre.

I am pleased to report that Committee members have made substantial progress on my request and I am highly supportive of their efforts. They have fully reviewed information uncovered by an Eastern Michigan University alumnus and local historian that suggest the building and theater's namesake promoted Blackface Theater including local performances. EMU Historian Mary-Elizabeth Murphy also was invited to share her deep expertise and insights as well.

The Committee members, and I, have stood in strong agreement from the start of this process that our actions in this matter must be grounded and guided by our University's statement of core values, one of which is inclusiveness. That statement asserts: "We create an environment that supports, represents, embraces and engages members of diverse groups and identities." In order to achieve that, our institutional choices about each and every aspect of our work must convey that commitment to our students, faculty, staff and community. Our values infuse all we do here at Eastern Michigan University.

Our next step will be for the Committee to engage our campus community, including the issuance of a call for suggestions about naming. This process will occur over the next several weeks. The Committee's work will be finalized at the conclusion of that process and a formal recommendation regarding a name change will be brought to the Board of Regents at the Dec. 10, 2020 meeting.

I am thankful for the Committee's ongoing work in this effort. The members are:

- Dana Heller, CAS Dean, co-chair
- Kathy Stacey, CMTA Director, co-chair
- Pirooz Aghssa, CMTA Faculty
- Pam Cardell, CMTA Staff
- Doris Fields, CMTA Faculty
- Jill Hunsberger, Foundation
- Sally McCracken, CMTA Emeritus Faculty
- KC Quirk, family member
- Ken Stevens, CMTA Emeritus Faculty
- Rand Stewart, CMTA Alum

Please look for further information about campus engagement opportunities in the weeks ahead.

Before I conclude, I would like to offer special thanks to the bargaining teams responsible for the agreement with the University's Part-Time Lecturers and to express my longstanding appreciation for the significant role Part-Time Lecturers have in the education of EMU students. I particularly want to acknowledge the leadership of Bargaining Unit President Daric Thorne and Bargaining Committee Chair Karen Gabrys in helping us reach a new three-year contract.

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

- The **EMU student chapter of the national Society for Human Resource Management** has been awarded a **2019-2020 Superior Merit Award** for providing exceptional growth and development opportunities to its student members. The EMU SHRM chapter has received the Superior Merit Award from the national society every year since 1996.
- Professor **Kristine Ajrouch** from the Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology department was interviewed on the **ABC News Nightline** program for the segment “Facing racism: Activists in Arkansas chase down KKK leader with BBQ and a protest.” The program noted Dr. Ajrouch’s recent research that measured the ethnicity of peoples’ social networks.
- Emeritus Professor and Part-Time Lecturer **Betty Beard**, former director of the School of Nursing, is making her expertise available as a COVID-19 volunteer contact tracer with the **Michigan Department of Health and Human Services**. Dr. Beard is volunteering in this capacity nearly every day. She estimates she has made at least 900-1,000 calls and has talked with people living in nearly every area of both peninsulas of Michigan.
- **Joseph Breza**, associate professor of Psychology, and **Thomas Mast**, associate professor of Biology, collaborated with their students in looking for ways to mimic the taste of salt in the foods we love, with the ultimate goal of helping eliminate the negative health consequences of sodium in the diet. Their research was sponsored by the **National Institutes of Health, with a grant of nearly \$430,000.**
- **Matthew Cook**, assistant professor of Historic Preservation and Cultural Geography, is part of a team that has won a **\$508,350 grant from the National Science Foundation** to research the extent to which museums serve the public through documenting, preserving, and interpreting difficult contemporary events.
- **Kasim Korkmaz**, a professor in the School of Visual and Built Environments has joined a University of Texas at San Antonio research team to work on a two-year project to improve the resilience of historic, sacred buildings along the Texas Gulf Coast region.
- **Tony Kurek**, a full-time lecturer in Accounting, was named the recipient of the **Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants (MICPA) 2020 Accounting Teaching Excellence Award.**

- **Vijay Mannari**, a professor in the College of Engineering and Technology is among seven exceptional American innovators inducted into the **National Academy of Inventors**, in recognition of his innovations in the field of UV-curing materials and systems.
- A chamber music trio including an EMU professor of cello, **Deborah Pae**, was awarded the **German Record Critics' Award** in the category of chamber music. The awards are among the most notable music honors in Europe, ranking with the GRAMMY Awards in prestige.
- **Steven Ramold**, professor of History in the College of Arts and Sciences, has been named **Washtenaw Count's best professor** in annual rankings by Current magazine.
- **Geoffrey Stanton**, a part-time lecturer in the School of Music and Dance, recently completed a **five-week summer residency as a visiting professor for Szechuan University** in the People's Republic of China. The exciting stint was an experimental on-line endeavor in which a handful of U.S. professors and instructors across the country were invited to participate.
- **Tsu-Yin Wu**, a professor in the College of Health and Human Services has been named the winner of the **2020 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation National Civic League Health Equity Award**. Dr. Wu has worked to transform health care systems to better serve the Asian-American community.
- A group of EMU faculty and students have received a **\$12,960 grant from the Ford Community Corps**, a unique program of the Ford Fund that brings students from a network of colleges and universities together with nonprofit organizations seeking new solutions to issues in the community.
- For the 18th consecutive year, Eastern has been named one of the **Best Colleges in the Midwest** by the Princeton Review.
- Eastern has been ranked among the **Best Universities in the country by U.S. News & World Report in the Social Mobility category** – defined as the opportunities it offers students who receive federal Pell Grants and their graduation rates.
- EMU was recognized by **Forbes** as one of “**America's Best-In State Employers 2020.**” The recognition is based on the results of an independent survey evaluating employer performance.
- **WEMU**, Eastern's National Public Radio station, has been named **Washtenaw Count's best radio station** in annual rankings by Current magazine.

Of Note

- The EMU **Aviation** program has signed a five-year partnership agreement with **Crosswinds Aviation**. Crosswinds has locations in airports in Livingston County, Flint, and Oakland County, and will add a location at Willow Run. The company also has a High School Flight Program. More than 80 high school students from the program have continued on at EMU for aviation degrees,
- The College of Engineering and Technology has earned accreditation for its **Mechanical Engineering undergraduate degree** from the Engineering Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology.
- The **EMU Digital Divas and Digital Dudes** programs has partnered with the **Mr. October Foundation** and **GameAbove** to launch a free after school STEM program for middle school students at four schools in metro Detroit. The 2020-2021 school year after school program will engage 125 eighth grade students. The program will be offered virtually for 20 weeks of instruction, 2 days a week, for 2 hours a day, engaging students in STEM activities in subjects such as healthcare, physics, HVAC, construction, wind power, hydroponics, and more.
- **Swoop's Food Pantry** celebrated five years of serving Eastern students who experience food insecurity. Swoop's has had more than 15,000 student visits and has distributed more than 270,000 pounds of food since it opened in 2015.
- Global esports organization **Gen,G** announced a \$1 million commitment to establish scholarships to develop the next generation of leaders in the gaming industry, with Eastern as a foundation partner.

Events

- **Dr. Toni Pressley-Sanon**, Associate Professor of **Africology & African American Studies** hosted an advocacy-writing workshop online for the general public on October 17 at the Ypsilanti District Library.
- The **Journal of Narrative Theory** hosted award-winning author **Ausma Zehanat Khan** on October 15 for a virtual discussion on her fantasy series, The Khorasan Archives.
- The **Center for Entrepreneurship** hosted a virtual Speaker Series event on October 14, with guest speaker **Kylee Guenther**, CEO of Pivot Materials.

- **University Advising & Career Services** sponsored a virtual **IT/STEM Job & Internship Fair** for students on October 7.
- EMU's 2020 **Homecoming** celebration, "EMU Homecoming 2020: The Remix," took place virtually from Tuesday, Sept. 29 through Sunday, Oct. 4. During the celebration, a variety of fun and interactive virtual events were available for EMU students and alumni, faculty, staff and community members.
- The **College of Arts and Sciences** hosted a virtual three-part speaker series titled "**Race, Policing, & Social Justice in 2020: Looking Back and Moving Forward**" on September 24, October 8, and October 22.
- The first **Star Lecture** was held virtually on September 23. **Rudy Bankston**, Educator & Practitioner of Restorative Justice, and **Robert Henak**, Attorney, Henak Law, discussed the topic, "Finding Justice in a Broken System."
- The EMU **Summer Smash Tournament** weekly series, run by EMU students, garnered participation from students from more than 100 high schools in 28 states.
- Detroit middle-school girls participated in the **Girls in Engineering Academy** in July, hosted by the **College of Engineering and Technology** and the **Engineering Society of Detroit**. The students virtually attended two courses, Introduction to Engineering and Smart Robot Cars.

Athletics

- Basketball (Men): **Derek Ballard, Jr.** and **Darion Spottsville** were to the **National Association of Basketball Coaches 2019-20 Honors Court** for excellence on the court and in the classroom.
- Golf (Women): **Maria Connelly, Katelin Lawson, Preaw Sripatrprasite,** and **Julie Stevenson** were named **All-American Scholars** by the Women's Golf Coaches Association.
- Golf (Women): **Julie Stevenson** won the 2020 **Golf Association of Michigan Women's Championship**.
- Golf (Men): **Ty Celone, Cougar Collins, Zach Sudinsky, Zack Mason** and **Tyler Rayman** were named **Srixon/Cleveland All-America Scholars** by the Golf Coaches Association of America.

- Golf (Men): The team earned **President's Special Recognition** for academic excellence by the Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA).
- Gymnastics (Women): The team was named a **top academic team** by the Women's Collegiate Gymnastic Association. The Eagles ranked **second in the nation** with a team GPA of 3.8875.
- Gymnastics (Women): **Megan Benzie, Cortney Bezold, Dani Coyne, Hadyn Crossen, Emili Dobronics, Shannon Gregory, Cali Harden, Arileyah Harris, Hannah Hartung, Brooke Hylek, Carly Kosanovich, Xarria Lewis, Corey Melcher, Molly Parris, Brianna Price, Charlotte Reynolds, Jada Rondeau, Caitlin Satler, and Mickayla Stuckey** were named as **Academic All-Americans** by the Women's Collegiate Gymnastic Association.
- Soccer (Women): The program was recognized by the United Soccer Coaches with a **Team Academic Award**.
- Swimming & Diving (Women): The program was named a **Scholar All-America Team** by the College Swimming and Diving Coaches Association of America.
- Tennis (Women): The program was named an Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) **All-Academic Team**. **Vasavi Ganesan** and **Emma-Lou Poimmiers** received ITA Scholar-Athlete awards.
- Track & Field (Women): **Kadian Clarke, Quintella Johnson, Emily Smith, and Alyssa Wade** were named as **All-Academic Athletes** by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.
- Track & Field (Men): **Taige Bryant, Owen Day, Chukwusom Enekechi, Owen Richardson, and Baldwin Magnusson** were named as **All-Academic Athletes** by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.
- Volleyball (Women): The program was recognized by the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) for academic excellence with the **United States Marine Corps/AVCA Team Academic Award** for the 16th consecutive season.
- Former EMU football players **Maxx Crosby, Bronson Hill, Darius Jackson, Andy Mulumba, Pat O'Connor, and Andrew Wylie** have been honored with the addition of their names to the **Ring of Honor** inside Rynearson Stadium.