

President's Report  
**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**  
Board of Regents  
April 22, 2021

Madam Chair and Distinguished Members of the Board of Regents:

One of the great days of the academic year is upon us. Please join me in celebrating more than 2,000 students who have applied for April or August graduation. We will celebrate them this Sunday, April 25, beginning at 9:30 a.m. At that time, a formal graduation ceremony video will be premiered on the University's Commencement webpage, featuring remarks from Board of Regents Chair Jeffries, myself, Provost Longworth and our academic deans, as well as the names of our graduates.

The Commencement webpage also features a link to a special celebration page where people can give a shout-out to their favorite graduate. More than 500 people have already posted their messages. Text, animated images, photos, or short videos are encouraged!

We are planning in-person graduation celebrations at a later date for all graduates this year and last year who have not had an in-person experience due to the pandemic. We are hopeful this will take place during this fall's commencement, depending on public health considerations and the removal of restrictions for large gatherings.

The University's Multicultural Graduation Celebration, hosted by the Center of Race and Ethnicity, takes place tomorrow (Friday, April 23) at 4 p.m. The event celebrates the achievements of students of color, both domestic and international, as well as the rich culture of our diverse student body. You can view the virtual event on the University's Facebook page.

It is my distinct honor to welcome new Regent Chad Newton to today's meeting. Governor Whitmer appointed Regent Newton to the Board in March. He is the Chief Executive Officer of the Wayne County Airport Authority, and a three-time EMU graduate. He also is a graduate of the FBI National Academy, and a former member of the EMU Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Our long and storied history as one of the top Forensics programs in the nation is evidenced in last weekend's fifth place finish in the National Forensics Association Tournament. Our Forensics team competed against 100 schools and finished ahead of such nationally known universities as Northwestern, Yale, Alabama, and Cornell.

Osade Imalele (OH-sah-day ih-MAH-lay-lay), a senior marketing major who's minoring in apparel, textiles and merchandising, led the exceptional showing. She earned a national championship in Persuasive Speaking. Osade, who resides in Northville and was born and raised in Detroit, is a first-generation Nigerian American in the United States and a senior in the Honors Program. She is graduating in December, and plans to work in creative design at a fashion or art-focused company.

EMU Forensics has placed in the top 15 nationally for more than 40 years, and has won more than 40 Michigan state team championships.

We are so proud of the students involved and the incredible support they receive from our outstanding Communications faculty. You can find a complete story with a photo of the team and the names and backgrounds of all of the students on EMU Today.

Special congratulations to Director of Forensics Patrick Seick and Professor Kathy Stacey, director of the School of Communications, Media and Theatre Arts.

On Tuesday, I issued a campus message and public statement regarding the murder conviction of Derek Chauvin in the killing of George Floyd. Although the verdict is a step in moving us forward, the reality is we have much work to do across all of our structures, organizations, and institutions to eradicate systemic racial inequities and injustices. Holding Derek Chauvin accountable will not eradicate the racism woven throughout the fabric of our society. We see it in the attack on voting rights, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, and the inequities throughout our education system.

We must own that racism, hate, and injustice are present in our campus environment as well. I hear the frustration, anger, and demand for change. I hear your pain and see the daily struggles. You are right when you say words only go so far and action is needed. We can and must do better.

The complete message can be found on the [Office of the President](#) Communications page on the University website.

In concluding my remarks today, I must follow up on the comments made by Chair Jeffries at the start of today's meeting concerning the criminal sexual assault allegations filed against several students and the lawsuit against the University.

We face a serious challenge today at Eastern Michigan, one that many universities face and one that must unite us in a powerful commitment going forward. That is our need to confront sexual assault and to support survivors who bravely come forward to tell of their past victimization by other students.

I want to reiterate my unwavering support for all survivors of sexual assault, and emphasize our collective and sincere resolve to do everything we can to provide a safe environment for our students.

The University seeks to learn every detail about the handling of cases that are the subject of the recent lawsuit. I've said this before, but it merits repeating: We want to know whether our processes related to these cases were followed and, if not, why not and what steps should be taken so that our students are protected and feel supported in reporting sexual assault. And I emphasize: We are committed to full transparency.

As Chair Jeffries stated, we have engaged Cozen O'Connor, an independent law firm recognized nationally for its expertise in Title IX, to review and assess EMU's actions. Its report will be made public when it is finalized. We will quickly take action to remedy any deficiencies noted.

Protecting students is critical to the University's educational mission. I can say from careful personal observation that our staff in law enforcement, Title IX, student affairs, and elsewhere work tirelessly to try to create a safe and supportive community for students, faculty and staff.

Yet it's clear more needs to be done. These allegations are serious and disturbing to all of us, and concern me deeply as your President.

Regarding the lawsuit, I will state this unequivocally: Any accusation that the University covered up crimes of sexual assault is false.

We take all claims of sexual assault and sexual misconduct seriously and we are committed to the thorough investigation of these incidents. Anyone who has information or wishes to report any incident of sexual assault or misconduct is encouraged to contact EMU Police or the EMU Title IX Office.

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

- **Milo Lees**, a junior majoring in Mechanical Engineering, and **Marie Surur**, a junior in Interior Design, in the **GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology**, will get the chance to create and implement interior designs and engineering for aircraft during paid, 12-week internships with **Textron Aviation**, the general aviation business unit of the conglomerate Textron, which is home to the Cessna, Beechcraft and Hawker brands.
- Student scholarship winners at the annual **Women of Excellence Awards**, sponsored by the EMU Women's Resource Center, included **Heather Bower, Simone Brown, Tiffany Chen, Hailee Hull, Kari Klavon, Katie Lane, Rachel Neil, and Mikaela Trowbridge**. Employee awards were presented to **Jenny Clark**, CATE Lab coordinator, **Allison Boone Green**, instructor and advisor for the Interdisciplinary Leadership minor, and **Rhonda Vander Zwagg**, director of operations for Women's Basketball.
- **Eunice Jeffries**, chair of the EMU Board of Regents, and **Rema Reynolds**, associate professor of Leadership and Counseling, have been recognized as 2021 **Michigan Chronicle Women of Excellence Honorees** for their exceptional success in business, community involvement, and philanthropy.
- **David DeLisle**, a senior from Brighton who is pursuing a degree in **Electrical and Computer Engineering**, won first place in the **Best Student Paper in the American Society for Engineering Education North Central Section Conference**.
- Emeritus professor **Garik Pedersen**, has been honored with the **American Music Teacher Article of the Year** award for his article, "The Victory Vertical Project: A Historical Case Study in Recreational Music Making." The award was presented by Music Teachers National Association.
- **Mary Ramsey**, professor of **English Language and Literature**, has been selected as one of 52 emerging college and university leaders for the 2021-22 class of the **American Council on Education Fellows Program**.
- **Christina Marsack-Topolewski**, Ph.D., LMSW and **Annemarie Kelly**, JD, LLM, from EMU's **College of Health and Human Services**, testified before the **Michigan House of Representatives Committee for Families, Seniors, and Children** in Lansing on March 16, advocating for new state laws to protect vulnerable adults with disabilities against online predation.

- **Samir Tout**, professor in the School of Information Security and Applied Computing, was a featured speaker at the **Michigan Mobility Institute's Mobility Talk** on March 17.
- EMU has been ranked **second among large public universities in the U.S.** and **first in Michigan** in the **Military Friendly Schools** list.
- The **Clinical Research Administration graduate program** has been ranked the **third in the nation** and **first in Michigan** by BestValueSchools.org.
- The **Paralegal bachelor's degree program** has been ranked among the **top 20 in the nation**, and the **number one public university in Michigan** by Study.com.
- The **Simulation, Animation, and Gaming program** has been ranked **18<sup>th</sup> in the Midwest** and **4<sup>th</sup> in Michigan** by Animation Career Review.

#### Of Note

- The **School of Nursing** has been awarded a **\$72,000 grant** to develop a virtual reality program to address health inequities impacting Asian Americans. The project will be led by **Tsu-Yin Wu**, professor of Nursing and director of the EMU Center for Health Disparities Innovations and Studies.
- A nutrition team from EMU's **Center for Health Disparities Innovations and Studies** has received a **\$4,000 grant** to improve access to healthy local foods and develop greater food and agricultural literacy in seeking to reduce health disparities in the low-income Asian American population in Kent County, Michigan.
- The **Aviation program** has opened its facility at Willow Run airport, which includes offices, flight planning areas, and an FAA approved flight simulator. Students in the program also have access to flight training in Flint, Howell, and Pontiac.
- The EMU **Center for Digital Engagement** is once again providing 48 **Digital Summer Clinic** paid internship positions for EMU students. Clinic interns span a broad range of majors, including Computer Science, Business, Communications, and Media Arts.
- The EMU **Family Empowerment Program**, in collaboration with EMU Regent and public health expert, **Dr. Jessie Kimbrough Marshall**, launched a **Vaccine Education and Outreach Effort** to educate the public about COVID-19 vaccines and local access.

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- EMU has launched **SMART**, the **Southeast Michigan Criminal Justice Policy Research Project**, a collaborative effort focused on research and education on criminal justice policies and systems locally. The project was founded by **Kevin Karpiak**, associate professor of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology.
- Several new episodes of **“EMU Today TV”** have been released on Xfinity On Demand and on EMU’s YouTube channel.

## Events

- The **Southeast Michigan Criminal Justice Policy Research Project (SMART)** sponsored a virtual roundtable exploring challenges to the administration of justice for sexual assault cases in Washtenaw County on April 15.
- **Oluwatobe Odeleye**, director of General Chemistry at the University of Oklahoma and an EMU alum, presented a seminar on online homework courses for chemistry on April 12, which was hosted by the **Chemistry** department.
- **Dr. Joneigh Khaldun**, chief medical executive for the State of Michigan, served as keynote speaker at the annual **Women of Excellence Ceremony** on April 12.
- Global esports organization **Gen.G**, **EMU**, and the **University of Kentucky** held a **virtual networking event** on April 10-11. Esports professionals, content creators, executives, players, and coaches participated in panels and tournaments.
- **Lisa Bee**, co-founder and chief executive officer of Sweetwaters Coffee & Tea, spoke at the Winter Entrepreneurship Speaker Series event, hosted by the **EMU Center for Entrepreneurship** on April 8.
- The **Southeastern Michigan Criminal Justice Policy Research Project** and the department of **Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology** hosted a roundtable webinar on racism in criminal justice education on April 1.
- **Engage@EMU** and **Regent Dr. Jessie Kimbrough Marshall** hosted a **“COVID-19: Making Informed Decisions”** webinar on March 31.
- **Sarah Levin**, program coordinator for Jews for a Secular Democracy, gave a lecture on religious freedom on March 31.
- **Zoey Luna**, transgender youth activist, was the keynote speaker for the **Trans Day of Visibility** event on March 31.

- The annual **Undergraduate Symposium** was held virtually on March 26 with 178 unique projects, presented by 195 students under the mentorship of 103 faculty members. This year's keynote speaker was **Brenda Alten**, a two-time Symposium presenter and current Director of Human Resources Communications for the J.M. Smucker Company.
- The **EMU Marching Band** held drumline clinics for current and future EMU students on March 22 – April 19.
- The annual **Graduate Research Conference** was held virtually on March 19 with more than 100 scholarly and creative research project presentations. This year's keynote speaker was **Dr. Shawn T. Mason**, a GRC alumnus and current Director of Research & Outcomes for Johnson & Johnson Health and Wellness Solutions.
- **Anne Caspar**, professor of Biology, presented "Effective Teaching to Support Inclusivity and Diversity in STEM" at the annual **George Liepa Sigma XI Speaker Series** on March 18.
- The **Journal of Narrative Theory** (JNT), an international academic journal sponsored by the **Literature program** hosted its **2021 JNT Dialogue event** on March 18.
- The fourth annual **Women of Color Feminisms & Leadership Symposium** was held virtually on March 16-17. The two-day experience was sponsored by the **EMU Women's Resource Center, Center of Race & Ethnicity**, and the **Women's and Gender Studies department**.
- EMU's **Drama and Theatre for the Young** held virtual performances from March 12 – April 9. The Storybook Series included performances, lesson plans, and additional relevant content descriptions.
- The EMU **Center for Jewish Studies** hosted **Mira Awad**, an Israeli/Palestinian singer, songwriter, actress, artist, and content creator, who performed and spoke with attendees virtually on March 7.
- **Engage@EMU** hosted a virtual childcare and early childhood education event, the "**CDC Mini Unconference**," on March 5.
- EMU offered special programming for students during the March 3-4 **personal wellness days**. Offerings included Wellness Woof, yoga, and nutrition programs.
- To celebrate **Women's History Month**, EMU offered a number of virtual, public events to shine the light on women's rights around the world, on racial equality for

women of color, and more, during the month of March. Information can be found at [today.emich.edu](http://today.emich.edu).

## Athletics

- Basketball (Women): **Areanna Combs** earned **All-MAC Second Team** and **MAC All-Defensive Team** honors. **Ce’Nara Skanes** was named **All-MAC Third Team**.
- Basketball (Men): **Derek Ballard Jr.**, **Chris James**, and **Darion Spottsville** earned **Academic All-MAC Team** honors.
- Cheer (Women and Men): The EMU Cheer Team won the **National Cheerleaders Association Intermediate Small Coed Division 1A national championship** for the first time in program history.
- Cross Country (Women): The Eagles earned **All-Academic Team** honors for the 2021 season. **Natalie Cizmas** was named to the **All-Academic Athlete** list.
- Cross Country (Men): **Andy Payne** qualified for the **NCAA Cross Country Championships**.
- Cross Country (Men): The Eagles earned **All-Academic Team** honors for the 2021 season. **Chris Devaney**, **Baldvin Magnusson**, and **Andy Payne** were named to the **All-Academic Athlete** list.
- Gymnastics (Women): The Eagles won the **MAC Championship**, its fourth in program history. **Hadyn Crossen** placed second and **Jada Rondeau** placed third in the **All-Around** competition. **Hadyn Crossen** and **Molly Parris** were named to the **MAC All-Tournament Team**. **Caitlin Sadler** earned **Co-Specialist of the Year** honors.
- Gymnastics (Women): The Eagles qualified for the **NCAA Regionals** with their MAC Championship, and a ranking of 31<sup>st</sup> nationally. Individual competitors will include **Cortney Bezold** on bars, **Hayden Crossen** in the All-Around, and **Shannon Gregory** on beam. **Jada Rondeau** will compete on bars, beam, and floor, and **Caitlin Satler** will compete on the beam.
- Gymnastics (Women): **Jada Rondeau** and **Caitlin Satler** earned **All-MAC Second Team** honors for the 2021 season.
- Soccer (Women): **Amanda Cripps** and **Sabrina McNeill** earned **All-MAC First Team** honors and **Lexy Alston** was named **All-MAC Freshman Team**.

- Swimming & Diving (Women): Diver **Bethany Berger** won the 1-meter diving **MAC Championship** and also qualified for the **NCAA Swimming & Diving Championships**.
- Track & Field (Women): **Quintella Johnson** was named **First Team All-MAC** and **Alyson Davis** and **Nina Ward** were named **Second Team All-MAC** at the **Indoor MAC Championship** event. **Quintella Johnson** won the High Jump event.
- Track & Field (Women): **Kadian Clarke** set a new school record in the shot put and **Miranda Caldwell** set a new school record in discus at the Peach State meet in April.
- Track & Field (Men): The Eagles won its 16<sup>th</sup> **Indoor MAC Championship** and second in four years, and **Sue Parks** was named **Coach of the Year**. **Baldvin Magnusson** won the Mile and 3000m events.
- Track & Field (Men): **Baldvin Magnusson** was named one of the **Co-Most Valuable Performers** and **Kaleb Simpson** was named **Freshman Track Athlete of the Year** at the Indoor MAC Championships.
- Track & Field (Men): **Trent Barron, Solomon Costa, Owen Day, Chris Devaney,** and **Baldvin Magnusson** were named **First Team All-MAC**. **Ronald Brandal, Chukwusom Enekwechi, Toby Gualter, Dante Lander, Owen Richardson, Richie Sadler, Baboucar Sallah-Mohammed, Kaleb Simpson,** and **Newlyn Stephenson** were named **Second Team All-MAC**.
- Track & Field (Men): **Taige Bryant, Baldvin Magnusson,** and **Newlyn Stephenson** qualified for the **NCAA Indoor Track & Field Championships**. Magnusson placed seventh in the 3000m event at the meet. Bryant placed 11<sup>th</sup> and Stephenson placed 16<sup>th</sup> in the Weight Throw event.
- Volleyball (Women): **Franki Strefling** earned **First Team All-MAC** honors for the 2021 season. Strefling was also named to the **AVCA Midwest All-Region First Team**.
- **Andrew Wylie**, former football student-athlete, EMU graduate, and current member of the Kansas City Chiefs, has pledged a \$150,000 gift to the Student-Athlete Performance Center.
- **Matthew Sexton**, former football student-athlete, has signed a free agent contract with the Pittsburgh Steelers.