

President's Report  
**EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**  
Board of Regents  
Feb. 17, 2022

Madam Chair and Distinguished Members of the Board of Regents:

I begin by thanking our guest speakers for sharing their thoughts and perspectives. I particularly want to acknowledge the individuals who bravely spoke on the matter of sexual assault.

As I have stated many times, these allegations are serious and disturb me deeply as your President.

There is no place for sexual assault on or off our campus and we will continue to do everything in our power to prevent it from happening. Our staff in law enforcement, Title IX, student affairs, and elsewhere work tirelessly every day to try to create a safe and supportive environment for students, faculty, and staff.

Contrary to some of the allegations, the University is steadfast in its commitment to respond to reports of sexual misconduct. Any accusation that the University covered up crimes of sexual assault is false.

As I have noted, the University has engaged the external firm of Cozen O'Connor, with which the University had no prior relationship, to review and audit our Title IX and related policies, procedures, and actions regarding these events. To date, the firm has reviewed tens of thousands of university documents spanning four to five years, from Title IX, Greek Life, Student Affairs, DPS, the Registrar's Office, IT, Housing, and other administrative offices. Cozen O'Connor has also interviewed many people at the university, including current and former employees, as well as Ypsilanti Police Department officers and representatives of the local prosecutor's offices. The firm's report, when completed, will be shared with the campus community. We will undoubtedly be given recommendations about where we can do better; we will address those head-on.

We also appreciate the concerned parents and employees of Ann Arbor Learning Community who came forward to speak today. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for coming forward, and also to briefly set the record straight on what the University has done, and what it does and does not have the power to do, as AALC's authorizer.

Eastern has served as AALC's contractual charter school authorizer for 24 years. It has been with sadness and regret that we have watched as AALC's enrollment suffered significant declines in recent years – from 273 students two years ago to less than 40 now. The drop in enrollment has, in turn, had a devastating effect on AALC's finances.

In November 2021, after much discussion with the school, EMU made the extremely difficult decision not to renew the school's current contract. At that time, our Charter Schools Office sent a letter to AALC laying out the reasons for the non-renewal, which takes effect at the end of the current school year, July 1, 2022. Such a decision does not mean automatic closure of the school - it is just a finding that Eastern can no longer serve as AALC's contractual authorizer for this charter as of July 1st. The school may find another authorizer, wind up affairs, or take other action. To assist the school in this transition, and

pursuant to the charter contract between the University and AALC, Eastern appointed a Conservator for the school in December - a decision that our Board of Regents ratified today.

At no time has Eastern advocated -- nor would we ever advocate -- for a school to be closed during the school year. Such a result is exceedingly disruptive for the students, parents, and entire school community. We have sent letters and had numerous conversations with AALC, its staffing company, Axios, and the State of Michigan, fiercely advocating that the school remain open to finish out the school year. We will continue to advocate that the school remain open as long as possible this school year, and will work with the State to the best of our ability on this.

Again, I appreciate our speakers' time and commitment to this school.

I have several other important items to cover in today's report.

It gives me great pleasure to announce a new position at the executive leadership level of the University: the position of Chief Diversity Officer.

It is fitting to announce this important and exciting development during Black History Month. Supporting our diverse communities, and embracing equity and inclusion, have been foundational building blocks of our great institution for decades and are a source of great pride and distinction.

I am pleased to announce Dr. Doris Fields as the University's interim chief diversity officer, while the University conducts a national search for the permanent position. Dr. Fields currently serves as Assistant Vice President of Academic Programs and Initiatives, and she is a tenured professor in the School of Communication, Media, and Theatre Arts. Her areas of specialization include interracial and interethnic communication, and intercultural communication.

She brings a wealth of experience to this role, including more than 20 years of exceptional service at EMU. Dr. Fields will report to me with a dotted-line report to Dr. Rhonda Longworth, provost and executive vice president of Academic and Student Affairs.

The Chief Diversity Officer's responsibilities include developing and implementing the University's diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging strategic plan in alignment with the University's Strategic Plan, and leading the Office of Diversity and Community Involvement.

The creation of this position was recommended by the President's Commission on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity, which was established in 2018. While the Commission has completed its work, the University continues to evaluate and pursue its recommendations. This action is also part of the University's Strategic Plan.

We will continue to update the campus about the timeline for a search for a permanent Chief Diversity Officer. I thank Dr. Fields for accepting this new role and I hope everyone will join me in welcoming her to this important position.

Our campus community has assembled a strong schedule of programming to celebrate Black History Month. Several events remain over the next week and a half. Of special note: tomorrow, at noon, the University will present a look at the life and legacy of Emeritus Professor Judy Sturgis Hill, who passed away in 2019. A live social media event will take place featuring a panel

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discussion about Dr. Sturgis Hill with comments from some of the many people she touched in her distinguished career. Panelists include Dr. Doris Fields, Dr. Kathleen Stacey, Dr.

Ray Quiel, Keith Jason, and Regent Alex Simpson. Please visit the University's Black History Month website for details and the full schedule of upcoming events.

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Regent Emeritus Gary Hawks, father of current Board Vice Chair Mike Hawks and father-in-law of Sam Jensen, director of planned giving for the EMU Foundation. As many of you know, Gary Hawks' career revolved around higher education. He served as Executive Vice President for University Relations at Eastern for many years. He later served as Michigan's Superintendent for Public Instruction on two different occasions. He returned to Eastern to serve on the Board of Regents from 2007 to 2010. Our deepest sympathies to the Hawks family and to his many friends and colleagues.

In closing, please join me in acknowledging alumnus Steve Klotz, president and CEO of the Huizenga Group in Grand Rapids. Mr. Klotz recently made a \$1 million gift to the College of Business. The funds will establish the Stephen J. Klotz Financial Learning Center. The gift is part of the University's current comprehensive fundraising campaign, Give Rise: The Campaign for Eastern Michigan University.

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

- EMU sophomore **Synene Abukaram** was a winner in the Dr Pepper Tuition Giveaway program during the Big 10 Championship on Dec. 4. Abukaram took home the \$100,000 grand prize. Abukaram is majoring in athletic training and is on the EMU rowing team.
- **Interior Design** students from the **GameAbove College of Engineering & Technology** were recently honored with the top three spots during the 14th annual **National CET Student Awards**, sponsored by the major Swedish software company, Configura. **Jillian Sitkiewicz** placed first, **Kelsey Shields** placed second, and **Olivia Grant** placed third. EMU has participated in the student rendering category of the National CET Student Awards for the past four years and this is the **third consecutive year** that all three top spots have been awarded to EMU interior design students.
- Assistant Director of the Honors College, **Jieron Robinson**, and three EMU **Honors College** students headlined a lively 75-minute workshop on enhancing diversity and inclusion in Honors education at the 6th Annual conference of the **National Society for Minorities in Honors** (NSFMIH). Student presenters were **Brianna Terrell**, president of the Black Honors Student Organization (BHSO); **Ondrakus Smith Jr.**, BHSO Treasurer; and **Tierra Tresvant**, Honors College Diversity Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Fellow. A generous grant from EMU Women in Philanthropy funded the students' travel.
- The **James H. Brickley Endowment for Faculty Professional Development and Innovation awards** for Fall 2021 have been announced. Recipients include: **Muhammad Ahmed** (GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology), **Cassandra Barragan** (School of Social Work), **Danny Bonenberger**, **Nancy Bryk**, and **Matthew Cook** (Department of Geography and Geology), **Dr. Quentin Hunter** and **Devika Choudhuri** (College of Education), **Surabhi Jaiswal** (Department of Physics and Astronomy), **Mary-Elizabeth Murphy** (Department of History), **Dr. Heather Hutchins-Wiese** (Health and Human Sciences) and **Dr. Claudia Drossel** (Department of Psychology).
- Part-time lecturer **Yael Rothfeld** from EMU's School of Music and Dance was named one of 25 semifinalists for the **Recording Academy and GRAMMY Museum's 2022 Music Educator Award**.
- The **College of Business MBA program** has been named among the nation's "Best Part-Time MBA Programs" by Fortune in its 2021 ranking. According to Fortune, the MBA programs reflect top-notch curriculums and access to world-class business

school professors, who have a track-record of seeing their alumni climb to the tops of the Fortune 500 world.

## Of Note

- With the help of a **\$445,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, Eastern Michigan professors and students will explore how preschool-aged children control their behavior and emotion in different environmental settings and what contributing factors make it harder for them to lose control. The three-year research study, led by **Assistant Professor of Psychology Jamie Lawler**, and **Associate Professor of Psychology Angela Staples**, will involve 100 families mainly in Washtenaw County and neighboring cities. Undergraduate and graduate students will help collect and observe the data related to sleep patterns, socioeconomic status and cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone and how these factors interact with a child's wellbeing.
- Exposing high school and middle school students to various STEM fields is a point of pride for the GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology. The **AT&T Foundation** recognized this commitment with a **\$42,000 grant** to support the college's **Digital Divas program**. The grant will support educational needs with the creation of two 30-minute pilot television programs highlighting Digital Divas, a program designed to attract more female students to STEM careers. The pilot series will be available to all school districts throughout Michigan. In addition, EMU will purchase and distribute after-school math kits to fifth- grade students in the coming months.
- The **Digital Divas** program is teaming up with **CODE 313** and **PNC Foundation** to create two **all-girl esports teams for high school students in Detroit**. Through this collaboration, students will have the opportunity to explore areas of STEM through the world of competitive gameplay. The Digital Divas program was founded in 2010 with the mission of encouraging girls to explore the areas of STEM. CODE 313 was established to enrich children in computer science education like coding, cybersecurity, robotics and virtual reality among others. They are collaborating for the first time ever to encourage girls to explore technology through electronic sports.
- EMU launched a **Lori's Hands chapter** after receiving funding from the **Michigan Health Endowment Fund**. Lori's Hands creates mutually beneficial service-learning partnerships between older adults with chronic illness and college students. EMU students assist older adults, individuals with chronic conditions, and their caregivers in both Wayne and Washtenaw counties with essential day-to-day activities such as grocery shopping, housekeeping, and meal preparation. Simultaneously, clients play a role in students' education: interns from the schools of social work and nursing and campus volunteers will develop insight and empathy into chronic illness and will develop skills relevant to their future professions.

- The Feb. 10 episode of **EMU Today TV**, which can be found on Eastern's YouTube channel, features an inside look at a **new \$1 million gift to the Eastern Michigan University College of Business**, and outlines the University's new **Executive Certificate in Entrepreneurship** and its \$25,000 venture challenge for new startup businesses.
- The Jan. 18 episode of **EMU Today TV**, which can be found on Eastern's YouTube channel, gives viewers an inside look at "**Welcome Home 2025**," a \$200 million project that will transform student housing on Eastern's campus. The episode also features an insightful interview with **Dara Munson, chair of the EMU Foundation Board of Trustees**, EMU alumna, and President and CEO of Chicago-based non-profit Family Focus.
- **University Archives** got an unexpected gift this year, when a volunteer for the **Veterans History Project** donated roughly 150 video interviews with American war veterans from the Ypsilanti area. **Bill Vollano**, himself a veteran, began collecting the interviews just a few years after the Library of Congress established the Veterans History Project in 2000. After taping the interviews Vollano copied them to DVDs and submitted them to the Library of Congress but kept the originals until he chose to donate them to EMU. **Connor Ashley**, a graduate student in history, has been cataloging the donated materials. Links to the recordings are available on the University Archives website.

## Events

- **Common Ground Educational Foundation (CGEF)** and EMU's **Professional Program and Training** will host the first **African Americans in Unions Leadership Conference** on Feb. 24-27. The four-day conference is designed for union or non-union workers and leaders from various industries to help build community, explore new ideas, and learn strategies and skills that will help guide them through the challenges workers face today.
- The **GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology** welcomed **Paul Ajegba, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation**, for an installment of **TechTalk** on Feb. 16. Ajegba shared his experience regarding the importance of equity and inclusion in infrastructure investments. He discussed how MDOT builds on success through partnerships, innovations, and mentorships, demonstrating how engaging and recruiting talented engineers is a high priority for the department now and into the future.
- **Porochista Khakpour**, the author of four critically acclaimed books, participated in the **BathHouse Events Reading Series** on Feb. 15.
- EMU alumna and serial entrepreneur **Talia Edgar** led a "**Cut the Cost of Branding**" **workshop** on Feb. 9 on how to develop your personal brand vs. your business brand, including the ins and outs of content creation.

- EMU's celebration of **Black History Month** includes a wide range of virtual events during February with programming that supports the University's commitment to our core value of inclusiveness and sustaining an environment that supports, represents, embraces, and engages members of diverse groups and identities.
- **McAndless Professor Dr. Kenneth Boyle** presented a student workshop on "Translating History into Cinema" on Jan. 28. Boyle offered insights into his work as a historical consultant on the Netflix biopic of Ossian Sweet.
- GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology hosted and **EMU TechTalk** featuring **Reuben Sarkar, president and CEO for the American Center for Mobility** on Jan. 26. EMU TechTalk, a series that launched last fall, offers students and faculty an opportunity to hear from established and up-and-coming leaders in the engineering and technology fields.
- **Tamar Manasseh**, an African-American Jewish mother and Founder and Director of "Mothers and Men Against Senseless Killings" (MASK), an organization fighting gun violence on the streets of Chicago, presented a webinar on Jan. 24. The event was sponsored by the EMU **Center for Jewish Studies**.
- **Dr. Ebrahim Soltani**, associate professor of political science, was a guest speaker for the **Honors College Star Lecture Series** on Jan. 19. He spoke about contemporary human migration and the profound impact on the mental well-being of migrants.
- Eastern presented its annual **Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration** with a variety of events from Jan. 14-17. The keynote was given by **Justin Hansford**, a law professor at Howard University and executive director of the Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Center.

## **Athletics**

- Cross Country (Women): **Olivia Chandler, Esme Davies, Sofia Invanko, Lexi Seifert**, and **Kaitlyn St. Bernard** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Cross Country (Women): The Eagles earned **U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association All-Academic** honors.

- Cross Country (Men): **Ronald Brandal, Solomon Costa, Chris Devaney, Baldwin Magnusson, Andy Payne, Noah Perrin, and Eddie Zuercher** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Cross Country (Men): The Eagles earned **U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association All-Academic** honors. **Toby Gualter** and **Baldvin Magnusson** earned individual All-Academic honors.
- Football (Men): **Darius Boone Jr., Ben Bryant, Matthew Buschman, Jordan Crawford, Dimitri Douglas, Dyland Drummond, Samson Evans, Jere Getzinger, Alex Howie, Preston Hutchinson, Marcellus Johnson, Tanner Knue, Jimi McAdams, Freddie McGee III, Alex Merrit, Thomas Odukoya, Jarrett Paul, TJ Peavy, Will Racely, Chad Ryland, Michael Smith Jr., DJ Smith, Carter Stagner, I'Shawn Stewart, Dylan Summers, Mike Van Hoeven, and Jalen Weathers** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Football (Men): **Mike Van Hoeven** was named a **CoSIDA First Team Academic All-American**.
- Rowing (Women): A program-record 44 rowers earned spots on the **Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll** for the 2021 fall semester. The student-athletes honored were **Synene Abukaram, Lauren Ahern, Rose Andrews, Hannah Barry, Kara Bishop, Emma Boerson, Laura Borchers, Priscilla Brom, Kat Childs, Madeline Dickerson, Elon English, Reagan Fazekas, Kristen Ford, Megan Fowler, Tiana Fox, Emily Gandy, Brianna Gracey, Claire Greenfelder, Olivia Hansen, Brynne Harder, Mary Hemgesberg, Chloe Hinojosa, Margaret Hoots, Payton Hopkins, Elaina Howes, Kaycee Johnson, Alexis Kettler, Kaialani Knox, Jessica LaRoy, Evie Lemons, Libbey Lloyd, Claire McCurley, Alexis Miller, Isabella Nothom, Caitlin Rodanhisler, Arden Schirru, Sydney Sheridan, Abbey Simpson, Carly Summers, Ariel Sutton, Sofia Vargas, Alexandria Walsh, and Lily Wilhelm**.
- Volleyball (Women): **Krista Blakely, Raeven Chase, Bella Hommes, Jayden Otto, and Kamryn Stilwell** earned **Academic All-MAC** honors.
- Eastern student-athletes recorded a **3.248 average GPA** for the fall semester. 61 student-athletes earned perfect 4.0 GPAs.
- The Mid-American Conference will honor the **50th anniversary of the passage of Title IX** with various programming throughout the 2022 calendar year. The year-long commemoration will highlight the passage of Title IX and what it has meant on a



national scale, while celebrating and highlighting the success of women's athletics within the MAC. The campaign will kick off on Feb. 2 with the celebration of National Girls and Women in Sports Day. Throughout the year, the Conference will honor the top 50 female student-athletes in MAC history via its social media platforms and website.

- Former EMU football player **Maxx Crosby** was named **Defensive MVP** at the annual **Pro Bowl**. He is just the third former EMU football player to reach the Pro Bowl, joining Chuck Shonta (1966) and TJ Lang (2016-17). Additionally, Crosby is only the second player from a MAC school to collect Pro Bowl MVP honors, joining Marshall's Randy Moss (1999).

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