

BOARD OF REGENTS
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Section: 13
Date:
April 18, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER AND HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

ACTION REQUESTED

It is recommended that the Board of Regents approve Mr. Christopher Kaufman as Commencement Speaker at the April 27, 2024 commencement ceremonies. In addition, it is recommended that the Board award an honorary doctoral degree in Commercial Science to Mr. Kaufman.

It is further recommended that the Board of Regents award an honorary doctoral degree in Public Affairs to The Honorable Trudy DunCombe Archer and an honorary doctoral degree in Public Service to Mr. Mohamad Issa at the April 27, 2024 commencement ceremonies.

STAFF SUMMARY

Biographies for Mr. Kaufman, Honorable Trudy DunCombe Archer, and Mr. Issa follow.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

The proposed Board action has been reviewed and is recommended for Board approval.



University Executive Officer
Rhonda Longworth, Ph.D.

3/28/2024

Date

Chris Kaufman - Bio

As an entrepreneur, executive, author, and investor, Chris Kaufman focuses his efforts on initiatives that build communities, solve human-centric problems, and positively impact Detroit and the surrounding region. He's the Co-Founder and former Chief Creative Officer of StockX, a revolutionary, global e-commerce platform where he built a full-service, in-house creative agency from the ground up. Recently valued at \$3.8 billion, StockX has created over 2,000 jobs around the world, many of which are in Detroit.



He's also an investor and advisor for numerous venture-backed startups led by female and minority founders and a member of the Advisory Board at GameAbove, a dedicated team of notable Eastern Michigan University alumni gathering funding (over \$20 million since 2019), resources, and support for EMU and the surrounding Ypsilanti community. Kaufman recently co-founded ArtClub, the world's first network-based marketplace platform created for the art world, merging marketplace and authentication technologies with social mechanics — empowering artists, collectors, and galleries to display, buy, and sell art while delivering royalties and building relationships.

Kaufman is a 2007 graduate of Eastern Michigan University, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art. He is currently pursuing his Master of Fine Arts in 2D Design at the Cranbrook Academy of Art (May 2024) and Master of Science in Learning and Organizational Change at Northwestern University (2025). His first book, which focuses on the link between leadership, culture, innovation, and creativity will be published by Forbes in early 2025.

**The Honorable
Trudy DunCombe Archer**

Judge Trudy DunCombe Archer retired from Michigan's 36th District Court. She was appointed by Governor James Blanchard, in 1989 and served on the bench for over 17 years.

Trudy DunCombe Archer, after graduating from Eastern Michigan University, became a tenured teacher with the Detroit Board of Education. While teaching she earned a Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling from Wayne State University. She taught for nine years before entering law school.

After graduating from Detroit College of Law, she began her legal career as an Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of Detroit. Several years later, she was appointed Assistant Dean at the Detroit College of Law, from which she was appointed to the 36th District Court.

In addition to Judge Archer's responsibility on the bench, she served as First Lady of the City of Detroit (Dennis Archer, Mayor) from 1994 to 2001. As First Lady, her focus was on Detroit's children. She spent many hours mentoring and encouraging children and their parents at school, sponsored programs, and various forums conducted throughout the City of Detroit.

As a well respected member of the legal community, Judge Archer maintained affiliations with the following legal associations: The American Bar, National Bar, Detroit, Metropolitan Bar, and the Wolverine Bar. She also belongs to the fellows of the Michigan State Bar Foundation and the Association of Black Judges of Michigan.

Trudy DunCombe Archer is a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a member of the Millionaires Club of the Museum of African American History in Detroit. She currently serves as a Director Emeritus for the Detroit Institute of Arts, is on the advisory board of the Greening of Detroit, and serves as an advisor to the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan for the Dennis W. Archer Foundation. Judge Archer has served on the boards of the Children's Center, the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan, the Women's Committee of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Children's Hospital of Michigan/Pediatric Clinical Services Board and on the advisory boards of the Junior League of Detroit and the African American Parent Magazine.

Judge Archer is the recipient of the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree from the University of Detroit Mercy. She has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Wolverine Student Bar Association, and the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanities Award. Archer has been a supporter and active participant in many community and civic projects aimed toward children in the betterment of the community. In recognition of her commitment, she has received numerous awards including the Goodfellows Tribute Award, the Distinguished Citizen Award presented by the Detroit Area Council Boy Scouts of America and the American Heart Association's Cor Vitae Award for Community Service.

Judge Archer was a Civil Rights Lecturer at Creighton University Law School in 1991. She was appointed by Governor John Engler to co-chair the 1994 Michigan International Year of the Family. Trudy DunCombe Archer and her husband, Dennis, have two sons, Dennis Jr. and Vincent and two grandsons, Dennis III and Chase.



Mr. Mohamad Issa Bio

Mr. Mohamad Issa is the founder and director of Global Educational Excellence (GEE), an education management and development organization based in Ann Arbor, Michigan and the educational service provider for one of EMU's Charter Schools - Global Tech Academy. He has invested in real estate development and business, which has enabled him to bridge education and business.

Mohamad Issa's story is a great example of resilience and determination. Despite facing displacement during the 1967 war, he and his family persevered. They decided to start anew and begin a new chapter in their lives. They finally immigrated to the United States and made Ann Arbor, Michigan their home. With hard work and perseverance, Mohamad graduated from Huron High School, attended Eastern Michigan University, and later earned a business degree from Central Michigan University. His story shows the power of hope and the importance of believing in the American dream.



In 1998, Mr. Issa established Global Education Excellence (GEE) after opening his first charter school, Central Academy, in Ann Arbor in 1996. He aimed to transform education by offering students education focused on character development, language, and culture. His success in Ann Arbor led to expanding his vision to other communities seeking similar opportunities for their children. His continued passion for providing Arabic Language and Culture education to students led to the creation of a comprehensive curriculum developed in partnership with universities and his team in the US. Today, many schools in the United States use this curriculum.

Under the leadership of Mr. Issa, Global Educational Excellence (GEE) has expanded its management and development to fourteen public school academies in Southeast Michigan. GEE has a team of over 650 employees serving more than 5,000 students.

In 2019, GEE expanded its presence in the MENA region. Mr. Issa's vision of establishing a permanent presence for GEE in the MENA region was finally realized with the opening of GEE MENA's office in Abdali Boulevard, Amman, Jordan. This office serves as an excellent opportunity to support partnerships between GEE and higher education institutions in the US and the MENA region, as well as K-12 initiatives.

Mr. Mohamad Issa has been recognized for his contributions to the community, including being named an Economic Bridge Builder by the Arab Chamber of Commerce in 2017. Additionally, he received the Trailblazer Award from the Michigan Association for Public School Academies for his work in developing Michigan's charter school movement. Issa has demonstrated strong support for Eastern Michigan University's Game Above College of Engineering & Technology, as evidenced by the dedication of the Mohamad M. Issa Atrium in 2022.

Mr. Issa is dedicated to several philanthropic initiatives, particularly in the areas of education and community development. His scholarship endowment provides vital support to EMU students, while his backing of EMU's community-based programs, such as Digital Diva's, paves the way for the next generation.

He currently serves on numerous professional associations and charity organization boards supporting diverse communities.