



David T. McFaddin
President

TO: Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Senate

FROM: President David T. McFaddin

DATE: September 13, 2021

RE: September Report

This academic year is already off to an incredible start and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to our faculty for your commitment to our students to provide the best academic experience possible. We implemented a strategic plan for a full return to on-campus classes, programming, and support services. Our students are already forming potentially lifelong connections, opening their minds to diverse thinking and experiences, and soaking in knowledge in the fields that will be critical for their future careers.

These transformative moments are the building blocks that will become the foundation of their adult lives. There has been no greater feeling than seeing the return of some of our traditions like the Big E Welcome Walk and class photo embraced by our newest class of Colonels. This incoming cohort of students has had so much taken from them by this global pandemic. They are already practiced at overcoming adversity and their determination should inspire us all to fulfill our mission to educate and inspire students to make the most of every opportunity before them.

After a period of uncertainty in an unusual recruiting environment, I am very proud to report that enrollment numbers are showing some very promising trends. Some of the highlights for this academic year include:

- 2,531 New First-Time Freshmen
- Nearly 10% increase in new class year over year (first time in six years)
- 12% increase of in-state enrollment
- Nearly 20% increase in-service region enrollment
- 68% of students living on campus
- Up undergraduate and graduate underrepresented minority enrollments
- Up in new-transfer students

We must remain focused on recruitment, retention, and graduation efforts. We still have some ground to gain in overall enrollment, but the current numbers reflect growth in some key areas of focus. The experience our students have at ECU can be the best endorsement we have in encouraging others to make ECU a college of choice.

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The ECU BookSmart program has created a unique buzz about our commitment to college affordability and removing financial barriers. Investing in textbooks and required course materials positions our students for success, and supports our faculty by ensuring students are prepared and ready to learn from the first day of class. More than 10,000 Big E Boxes have been supplied to students this fall and students and parents have expressed their gratitude for removing that expense from the overall cost of attendance.

While our incoming class faced trepidation in how they would navigate a post-pandemic college experience, our graduates entered an evolving workforce and they too persevered to achieve their career goals. We take pride that ECU graduates have earned the #1 ranking in Kentucky employment rates among bachelor's degree holders. 76% of ECU graduates find full time jobs within six months of graduating, and that is a true testament to how well our faculty are equipping graduates for their future careers.

In classrooms, labs and real-world learning environments our students receive world-class instruction, and we thank you, our faculty, for fostering educational excellence at ECU. A special congratulations to Faculty Regent Dr. Jason Marion for earning the 2021 [Global Health and Innovation Conference \(GHIC\) Innovation Prize](#) for his water purification research. We will continually look to provide innovative teaching and learning methods for the betterment of our faculty and students.

This semester we remain vigilant of public health measures and are closely monitoring both our university and local rates for COVID-19 vaccinations and infections. Our COVID-19 campus dashboard is active at <https://staywell.ecu.edu/dashboard>. ECU student and employee populations have seen only moderate case totals of illness in comparison with increased cases in our local area. Contact tracing remains a key component in recognizing and addressing any potential vulnerabilities among our campus community. Please continue encouraging students and colleagues to report cases of illness or exposure, be mindful of any potential symptoms, quarantine or isolate as needed and advised by health officials, and wear masks. Although higher education was not part of the call for last week's Special Session, the General Assembly did affirm that COVID decisions will be made at the local level. Here at ECU, as we have since the beginning of the pandemic, we will continue our protocol of monitoring local and state data and more specifically continue the mandatory indoor mask wearing until further notice. Vaccination remains the strongest tool to reduce transmission and lessen the risk of severe illness. If you are already fully-vaccinated, thank you. Be sure to log in to ECU Direct and report your vaccination status. If you are able but not currently vaccinated, you are strongly encouraged to receive a vaccination as soon as possible. Increasing the overall vaccination rate of our students, faculty and staff will position us to have the greatest chance of finishing this semester and year without any interruption to in-person learning, residential living and campus programming and events.

After a year of limited interactions, we are offering structured student life activities to promote the overall well-being of students as part of our Exceptional Eastern Experience (E3) programming. You will find a number of these events and experiences open to our campus and local communities including live music, pep rallies, festivals and much more. I hope you will take advantage of these events and are invited to enjoy the E3 schedule of activities along with your friends and family.

I hope the semester is off to a successful start and I am excited to see excellence in action for the upcoming academic year. Thank you for all you do and for your commitment to ECU as a School of Opportunity.

One Eastern,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David T. McFaddin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David T. McFaddin