

Good afternoon!

Thank you, Chairs McCready and Schuitmaker, and all of the Subcommittee members. My name is Donald Loppnow, and I'm proud to be serving as Eastern's interim president until Dr. James M. Smith begins his tenure as Eastern's president on July 1.

Dr. Smith is currently President of Northern State University in South Dakota. He has deep ties to the Midwest. He was born in Ohio and graduated with two degrees from Miami University in Ohio, including his doctorate in Educational Leadership. He also spent considerable time in various leadership roles at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, including vice president of economic development. We are pleased he will be joining us, and I know you will enjoy working with him.

Having served at Eastern for 40 years as professor, provost and interim president on two other occasions in our past, I believe deeply in our University and its purpose and mission.

We are pleased to be here to share Eastern Michigan University's story, with a particular focus on the innovative and successful initiatives we have implemented to increase student retention and degree completion. We are quite proud of these efforts. We also look forward to your questions, comments and feedback.

These are good times at Eastern Michigan.

Freshmen Enrollment Growth

Last fall we enrolled the second largest entering freshman class in our 167-year

history, only a few students short of our all-time record, set just two years ago in 2013.

Honors College

Our Honors College has more than doubled in freshman enrollment since 2011. This year, the Honors College enrolled more than 450 students in its freshman class, with a record 1,600 students in the overall Honors Program, an increase of 5 percent from last year's record overall total. This year, the Honors College moved into a new location, an excellent and very practical facility, the former Holy Trinity Chapel on the eastern end of campus. The University purchased the building, which will be used by multiple academic departments.

Fulbright Scholars

This past year also brought strong external validation for both our academic and community engagement efforts. Just last week, Eastern was recognized as the

number one producer of Fulbright Scholars in the United States among Master's institutions. We were recognized for having five faculty awardees -- more than any other Master's institution and ahead of institutions such as Villanova, which was the second highest Master's producer with three awardees. This recognition is testament to the outstanding faculty at Eastern and their

extensive scholarly achievements. For our students from Michigan, across the United States and from more than 50 international countries, this recognition reflects the world-class learning environment and the high quality teaching that takes place every day on the Eastern Michigan University campus.

Eastern was recognized as the number one producer of Fulbright Scholars in the United States among Master's institutions.

Doctoral University

Eastern was recently reclassified from a large master's university to a doctoral university in the 2015 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education rankings system, a nationally recognized framework for identifying and comparing American institutions of higher education. Doctoral universities award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees each year.

This designation change recognizes exceptional efforts on behalf of our faculty and administration to increase our efforts in graduating doctoral students.

Community Engagement

And last year, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recognized Eastern Michigan University for its deep level of community engagement, designating EMU as one of America's colleges or universities that excel at interacting with their surrounding communities.

This is an extremely meaningful honor. Of the more than 4,500 public and private four- and two-year degree-granting colleges and universities in the U.S., only 240 received the Carnegie Foundation's 2015 Community Engagement Classification.

National Moot Court Competition

Last month, Eastern students placed in three of the top 10 positions in the nation in the Moot Court competition, finishing third, fourth and seventh. No other students from Michigan finished among the top 30 teams.

The competition features appellate-court style arguments and 20-page written briefs that follow the style and standards of legal briefs submitted to the United States Supreme Court.

Investing in Academic Infrastructure

Over the last seven years, Eastern has continually reinvested in improving its academic facilities and residence halls, along with upgrading classroom technology. This past summer featured extensive improvements, funded by the University, to historic Rackham Hall, which houses our ever-expanding science and health-related programs.

Since 2008, Eastern has invested about \$240 million in capital improvement projects, of which only \$31 million came through the legislature's capital outlay process.

Since 2008, Eastern has invested about \$240 million in capital improvement projects, of which only \$31 million came through the legislature's capital outlay process. The remainder was self-funded. More than 94 percent of this spending was for academic and student building improvements and public safety.

These crucial improvements align with the University's goal of spending what is needed to ensure our academic programs meet the demands of today's economy and, most importantly, result in Eastern Michigan graduates providing vital talent to our state.

Challenges Going Forward

Yet despite such recent successes and enhancements, it's important to note that Eastern Michigan now faces a variety of financial challenges, some of which have arisen because of the University's important and strategic decision to invest in facilities designed to provide Michigan students with access to programs that meet the needs of today's employers.

Moreover, Eastern continues to be ranked 13th out of Michigan's 15 public universities when it comes to having the lowest tuition costs.

Today, Eastern's financial reserves stand at about \$22 million, among the lowest of Michigan's public universities.

We have taken many steps to address these challenges because, at Eastern, we vividly understand that approximately 80 percent of every dollar that we spend comes from the pockets of our students and their families, and the remaining 20 percent comes from the taxpayers of the State of Michigan. Thus, over the past four years, EMU has held the line on administrative expenses, eliminating 167 non-faculty positions, with a salary cost savings to the University of nearly \$9 million annually. Our significant cost savings in administrative expenses has been recognized by the state in performance metrics.

[A]t Eastern, we vividly understand that approximately 80 percent of every dollar that we spend comes from the pockets of our students and their families....

The Governor's Budget

Because of these conditions and its present position, **Eastern Michigan University strongly supports the increase in state appropriation recommended in the Governor's budget proposal.**

We also hope that you support the Governor's request for capital funding for Strong Hall, which would be the final element of the University's Science Complex, Eastern's centerpiece for STEM education.

The building, located in the middle of campus, was built in 1957 and has not received any significant overall

improvements since its construction. Strong Hall has been Eastern's top capital outlay project since fiscal year 2010.

Meanwhile, Eastern has invested \$90 million in the renovation of the adjacent Mark Jefferson building and construction of 80,000 square feet of new academic facilities, including a planetarium, connecting both to make up the Science Complex.

The Science Complex project, the largest and most costly in Eastern's history, is another example of the University's broad effort to educate students in science-related disciplines that lead to careers that can contribute to Michigan's continuing need for STEM professionals.

The Strong Hall project will involve renovation of the entire 80,713 square foot structure, including modernizing classrooms and labs, lecture halls, student common areas and faculty offices, along with creating flexible use spaces for research and instruction and updating of architectural, structural, mechanical and electrical systems. The estimated cost to renovate Strong Hall is \$39.5 million. At a funding mix of 75 percent state and 25 percent University, Eastern's cost share would be \$9.9 million.

I should also add that as Michigan's second oldest university – founded 167 years ago – we have many older buildings, including the College of Technology Building, which is in need of substantial renovation.

Amid responding to the need for evolution and change while containing costs, I want to emphasize that Eastern Michigan

remains a university of opportunity, a campus that strongly emphasizes a distinct faculty-student connection along with student engagement and research. This is a defining trait of Eastern Michigan.

Student Retention & Degree Completion

To tell you about our specific efforts in boosting student retention and degree completion, please welcome Dr. Rhonda Longworth, our interim provost and executive vice president for academic and student affairs. Dr. Longworth will share details of our retention and degree completion efforts, in which Eastern has applied considerable resources and has become nationally recognized for our dedicated efforts.

Dr. Longworth is a professor of political science and veteran administrator. She has worked at Eastern for 21 years, most recently serving as associate provost and associate vice president for academic programs and support.

In that capacity, she led the academic program development and student support efforts of the University, which involved areas such as advising and career services, retention, transition and first-year programs, along with community college relations and the expansion of articulation agreements with community colleges.

#####