

Good afternoon,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Eastern Illinois University's Fall 2018 State of the University Address. I hope all our returning faculty, staff and students had a wonderful summer and found time for family, relaxation, and rejuvenation. And for all who are new to our EIU Family, welcome to a very special place—one that celebrates our academic excellence and educational mission; champions and fosters respect, diversity and inclusion for all its members; and embraces the spectacular spirit and brand, so ingrained in our institutional DNA, for being All In for our students' success.

Each New Year brings new faces and new opportunities to our campus, enhancing our sustainability, progress, and growth. At Faculty Orientation, we welcomed more than 30 new full- and part-time faculty and academic support staff. We thank you for choosing Eastern to broaden your professional careers, and we are extremely pleased to have you join us. Will all our new faculty and academic staff—as well as all other new university staff in attendance—please stand and be recognized? Welcome to the EIU Family.

If we have any students in attendance today, will you also please stand. EIU thanks you for choosing our outstanding university for your higher education. Please know our faculty and staff are committed to investing in each of you and all of your futures successes. I would also like to thank you just for taking the initiative to attend Eastern's State of the University Address. I just hope it wasn't required as a class assignment.

This year you will notice a few changes in the university's leadership team, some of which are related to our newly aligned academic colleges. Please join me in recognizing these university leaders.

Ms. Laura McLaughlin joins us as our new General Counsel. Laura hails from St. Louis and served for several years as General Counsel for Logan University in Chesterfield, Missouri. Laura, welcome. Will you please stand and be recognized.

With the retirement of long-time associate vice president for academic affairs, Jeff Cross, the provost has appointed Dr. Mark Kattenbraker to serve as interim AVP for academic affairs. Mark, will you please stand. Thank you for taking on this very important position.

We also welcome Dr. Zach Newell as our new Dean of the Mary J. Booth Library. Zach comes to EIU from Salem State University in Massachusetts, where he served in various roles over the past 10 years including interim director of the Berry Library. Zach, please stand and be recognized.

Finally, I would like to introduce the four Interim Deans of our newly aligned colleges. Dr. Doug Bower has been appointed Interim Dean of the College of Education; Dr. Jeanne Lord has been appointed Interim Dean of the College of Health and Human Services; Dr. Anita Shelton has been appointed Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; and, Dr. William Minnis has been appointed Interim Dean of the Lumpkin College of Business and Technology. Will the four deans please stand. Thank you for your commitment to leading our academic colleges and serving EIU with such passion and vigor.

The excitement we've all witnessed on campus during these first several weeks of the academic year has been absolutely phenomenal. It began on Move-In day when cars continued to flood into campus throughout the day. As typical, the new students and their parents expressed great joy—and some accompanying anxiety—as reality struck that an important, new journey was about to take place for them all.

I'd like to personally thank all the faculty, staff and students that volunteered to help with Move-In day. Parent after parent commented that the friendliness and helpfulness of our volunteers reassured them that far and away, Eastern was the right choice for their student and family.

The excitement continued throughout the Prowl weekend where myriad activities were scheduled to help acclimate our new students to the campus environment, build our community, and reduce their anxiety about the unknowns they would face on the first day of classes.

A highlight of Prowl weekend was the academic convocation where this year's Faculty Laureate, Dr. Don Holly, professor of anthropology, delivered an excellent address. (Or as the students would say, "a super awesome address.") His message for students to become broad-based learners rather than restrict their university studies solely to specialized skills and knowledge was a profound shout-out to the importance of general studies in one's personal and professional life. Of course, I appreciated his anthropological analogy comparing hunters and gatherers to farmers in making his point -- we anthropologists need to stick together. Don, congratulations on your selection as EIU's 2018 Faculty Laureate, and for your dedication to our students.

Following the academic convocation, the EIU Marching Band under the direction of Dr. Ben Druffle led the students from Lantz Gymnasium to O'Brien Stadium for this year's annual student "EIU" photo. I'm very pleased to say the three letters, E-I-U, were very densely populated, just what we have been working so hard to accomplish. It was a marvelous sight to witness.

So let's take a few moments to discuss this year's enrollment. Overall, our 10th-day student headcount was 7,526 students, a 7.1 percent increase over last Fall. Our first-time, full-time freshmen class came in 24.5% larger than last year, and the number of transfer students and graduate students were up as well.

Increases in all three categories (first-time full-time freshmen, transfers and graduate students) constitutes the proverbial "enrollment management trifecta". Had we not experienced challenges with prospective international students securing student visas-- a trend that is being seen nationally -- EIU's enrollments would have been even greater. Even as it was, our graduate enrollment this Fall stands at 1488 students--the largest enrollment of graduate students in the last 8 years! And a definite upside of our international enrollments is that our students currently represent a record 52 countries-- demonstrating a broader interest in attending EIU by interested prospective students from across the world.

Another point that should absolutely be noted concerning our enrollment gains is that we accomplished them without lessening our admissions requirements in any way. In fact, our incoming class of freshmen have a high school average GPA of 3.15 compared to 3.06 in last year's class. We recruited a strong, talented class of students who are well prepared and have the abilities to be successful.

The departments that saw the largest percent increases in freshman majors over last year were Art; Sociology/Anthropology and Criminology; the School of Technology; and, English. Areas that increased by the greatest number of new freshman majors compared to last Fall were the departments of psychology, sociology/anthropology/criminology, and biology.

Graduate programs with the largest increases in number of majors were Curriculum and Instruction for Elementary Education, Education Leadership, and Cybersecurity.

Many people have asked (including some university administrators and Trustees from other campuses), how were these significant increases achieved at EIU? To answer that, I'd encourage you to look around this auditorium. It took the deliberate actions of our entire university community, our Trustees, alums, and our external friends and partners. It was the result of a strategically focused, collaborative and broad-based initiative to begin to regrow our university. Everyone in this room and everyone on this campus contributed in some degree to our recent enrollment successes, and I sincerely thank you all for your comprehensive efforts.

Deserving particular recognition are Josh Norman, associate vice president for enrollment management, Kelly Miller, director of admissions, and all the outstanding members of their staffs. Josh, Kelly and all of your staff members who are here today, please stand and accept our thanks for your incredible work this past year.

Truthfully, I have never witnessed a better recruitment team in my career than what we have right now at EIU. Josh and Kelly have brought needed stability and committed leadership to their offices and have built a wonderful team of talented and productive staff and admission counselors.

There is so much that goes into developing and executing the complex recruitment and strategic communication plans used by our enrollment management division. Behind the scenes are two extraordinary groups; the 18 individuals who make up the Communication Planning Group and the 20 individuals who make up the EWORX committee. These groups represent a broad range of offices from ITS, CATS, alumni affairs, admissions, University Marketing, Registrar, and others, that work collectively and cooperatively to facilitate our innovative and dynamic recruitment activities.

These are the groups where most of all the incredible ideas and well-executed projects to support Enrollment Management originate. Will members of the Communication Planning Group and EWORX please stand. Thank you for helping to catalyze our enrollment growth this year, and we look forward to seeing what you can accomplish in the future.

Numerous others deserve credit and recognition for their part in helping the university increase enrollments. And with apologies to those I may miss, special thanks to our facilities and trades staff, grounds keepers, dining and housing staff, student tour guides, all faculty and staff that participated in visit days, our academic departments that created special recruitment activities or sent their students out to various high schools on recruiting missions, and everyone else that expressed EIU's brand promise of being All In when engaging with prospective students and their families.

Recruiting greater numbers of students in the most competitive market we have ever seen, while maintaining admission standards as we have done, is extremely difficult. It calls upon a complex interactive plan that integrates numerous components to achieve success. No doubt, we are very pleased with our enrollment increases this Fall, but we will need to work just as hard or harder at keeping our positive momentum going. We are fortunate to have witnessed an encouraging return on our investment in time and focus this past year and I know we can achieve even higher enrollments in Fall 2019.

As I begin my fourth year – yes, fourth year, I can't believe it either – as president of Eastern Illinois University, this my first year as president that EIU was informed of our appropriated budget at the beginning of the fiscal year. I cannot tell you how important that is for the purposes of university planning and implementation. A stable and predictable appropriation has been the primary focus and advocacy of the presidents of our state's nine public Universities and University Systems as we continue to champion the countless values of higher education to our state's leaders.

For FY19, EIU has been appropriated \$39.5 million for operating expenses. This represents an increase of 1.9 percent over what we received in FY18, but 8.1% less than we received in FY2015—the last year prior to the state's budget impasse. Although it's admittedly less than what we feel would be appropriate, we are certainly appreciative of our legislators and Governor for supporting and enacting funding for our institution.

In addition to the operating appropriation, we were appropriated and/or reappropriated approximately \$10 million for various construction projects around campus. And although we do not know exactly how many of these projects will actually be funded, work has already been authorized and begun by the Capital Development Board to complete two elevator projects on campus—one at McAfee and the other at the

Student Services Building. It is wonderful to see these projects being worked on and we hope additional funds from the appropriations will be authorized for more projects to begin.

As always, the university is committed to balance our expenses with our revenues. To do so, we will need to maintain the fiscally conservative policies we've adopted over the past few years. In essence, spending levels will closely parallel last year's across all divisions. I was pleased that the university was able to provide modest salary increases this past year and if we are truly conscientious in maintaining control over our expenditures, salary adjustments will be assured to continue in upcoming and future years.

During this past year a 12-member bipartisan workgroup of six State senators and six State representatives joined together to address issues of higher education—including the major challenge of combating the devastating outmigration of Illinois high school graduates to colleges and universities outside our state. The Workgroup met with numerous stakeholders, including public university presidents and their enrollment management leaders. The result led to crafting several legislative bills to support higher education and assist Illinois colleges and universities with additional resources to recruit Illinois high school graduates. We are extremely grateful to the members of the Higher Education Workgroup for making higher education a top priority in the State and I thank them for their support and advocacy.

I'd like to share with you information on two bills that should have considerable benefit to EIU's recruitment efforts that have now become law. House Bill 5020 stipulates that students who receive MAP money as freshmen will be granted highest priority for continuing MAP funding in their subsequent college and university years. MAP funding has always been an incentive for eligible high school graduates to stay in-state for their higher education. However, this bill goes further by instilling confidence that if a student begins their higher education studies in Illinois, their MAP funding will continue throughout their in-state undergraduate careers.

The second bill, House Bill 1772, initiates a new state merit-based scholarship program named AIM HIGH with an appropriation of \$25 million for this fiscal year. Unlike the MAP program, AIM HIGH scholarship funds are restricted to attendance at one of the 12 Illinois public universities. All 12 universities have access to a portion of the \$25 million determined by their overall enrollment, but to do so, the university must match the amount in new financial aid dollars awarded to students. EIU is eligible for about \$1 million of the \$25 million program funds.

The potential for EIU to participate in AIM HIGH for recruiting students for Fall 2019 is to me (and I hope to you) – a no-brainer. We have accepted the funds and have approved and publically announced, to very positive reviews, an exciting and innovative multi-dimensioned AIM HIGH Scholarship initiative that includes three scholarship programs that resolutely demonstrate EIU's commitment to Illinois students.

Program one is the **EIU Promise** whereby EIU will completely offset the remaining balance of a student's tuition and fee costs for resident families demonstrating a family income of \$61,000 or less.

The second program is the **EIU Cost Match**, which stipulates that EIU will match the out-of-pocket cost of attendance of any regionally accredited public university in Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin. To qualify, Illinois students can submit their Financial Aid Award letters from qualifying institutions in those states.

And finally the third program, the **EIU Merit Scholarship Bonus** provides qualified Illinois students a renewable scholarship bonus of at least \$2,500 each year. By combining Merit Scholarship benefits with state-funded AIM HIGH dollars, qualified EIU students are eligible to earn up to \$18,000 in scholarship funding over four years or eight semesters.

We believe these three programs will be game-changers for EIU as they provide our Admissions staff the critical financial leverage they need to successfully compete with out-of-state universities for our Illinois students. Access and affordability are more than just buzzwords at EIU. They are the driving principles that guide our decisions every day.

The final issue related to State-level activities that I would like to share is extremely important. It relates to the initiation of a comprehensive review of the public universities base funding formula. The review is being coordinated by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and is being undertaken by a committee representing each of the 12 public universities. Vice President McCann, Provost Gatrell, Government Relations Director Katie Anselment and I have been involved in each meeting.

To date, the discussions and review have not resulted in any recommendation for change, but it is possible that a new university base funding model may be on the horizon, and perhaps sooner rather than later. The EIU team is committed to the ideal that any funding formula must include significant components and appropriate and fair weighting of Carnegie designation, university mission, and student demographics, as well as performance outcomes of first-year retention, continuation, graduation and placement of students. I will keep the university community updated on the progress of these discussions.

Over the past two years, the development and execution of our Vitalization Plan has guided university operations and the Plan remains as relevant today as it was in Fall 2016. It is exciting to witness the measurable successes that the Plan has produced in all of its varied components. Although many of these accomplishments and improvements are posted on the Vitalization webpage, I'd like to share some of the advancements we've achieved over the past year.

I hope everyone has noticed the improvements in beautification of our grounds and facilities. Much of the credit belongs to the 10-person summer grounds crew who took care of EIU's 320 acres. That's a pretty tall order given the amount of mowing, weeding, trash disposal, and general beautification efforts that we depend on across campus. They work extremely hard for all of us, allowing our visitors—including prospective students and families—to enjoy our appealing environment. Please consider giving our groundskeepers a shout out of appreciation when you see them working across campus.

The summer is when we concentrate on upgrading and refreshing our residence halls and other properties. Along with the customary repairs and painting that takes place in all of the residence halls, we repaired sidewalks and/or entrances to Taylor, Thomas and Douglas Halls, replaced the Thomas Hall patio, and began staircase and surrounding repairs to the south side of Lantz Gym.

During this past year we made tremendous strides developing and executing an authentic branding and marketing initiative. With the assistance of our marketing partner, The Thorburn Group, we launched EIU's first significant marketing campaign in October 2017 to support our Fall 2018 recruitment cycle. Our goal was to expand awareness of our extraordinary and unique EIU story to a broader audience of prospective students and families. By all measures, the strategic investment yielded a strong return with a 25 percent increase in freshmen inquiries and a 24 percent increase in freshmen applications over the previous year.

While significant, EIU's enhanced marketing initiatives are but one component of a much more expansive vitalization of our recruitment plan. It certainly assisted in bringing greater awareness and applications to EIU, but we need to remember the actual commitment of prospective students to enroll in our university relies on the combined and coordinated efforts of our outstanding admissions staff and our entire university community.

Helping them to achieve success, enrollment management made several enhancements including updated recruitment webpages; implementation of a sophisticated communication plan that customizes messages for

each prospective student; a re-imagined College Day providing more time for prospective students to hear from, and talk to, current students and faculty – the two groups that prospective students indicate as being most influential in their decision to choose EIU; and, introducing an EIU advocates program that calls upon our passionate EIU alumni and other supporters to be active in our recruitment activities – the size has grown to over 400 participants! I can only imagine what innovative and dynamic ideas they have planned for our next recruitment cycle.

In the area of vitalizing University technology, ITS, under the leadership of Josh Awalt, was funded to refresh the core server and network infrastructure of EIU's Data Center. This upgrade allows us to expand the number of Virtual Desktops we can support for students, faculty and staff as well as meeting the growing technology needs for campus. In addition, ITS upgraded the internal networks between our academic departments to 10 gigabytes to ensure we have the necessary infrastructural backbone, partnered with ATAC and the VPAA office to address Wi-Fi needs in our academic buildings, and they internally reconfigured their office organization to maximize management and increase productivity.

It took the entire past year of behind the scenes preparation to implement our transition to Banner 9. Numerous offices worked extremely hard to provide a seamless transition to the new system. I would especially like to thank the staff from ITS, the business office, procurement office, human resources, payroll office and the benefits office for their significant roles in making the implementation successful. The entire university thanks you for making it as easy as possible for us to learn and adapt to the new system.

In the division of student affairs several Vitalization recommendations were met. Effective Spring 2018, incoming transfer students had the option to move through an independent online orientation program allowing for their greater convenience. After completing the online orientation, the students are contacted to arrange a phone or skype meeting with their academic advisors. Feedback on this new option has been positive for its convenience and cost savings from students who can now circumvent this once-required visit to campus.

Working with Web Services, all student affairs departmental websites have been converted to reflect EIU's updated brand standards and work is continuing similarly to refresh all display and print materials.

The new mobile engagement and communications platform, Panther Life, continues to grow in program content and campus community use. In FY 18, the Panther life App was downloaded by more than 2400 users, with more than 15,000 event views and 19,000 views of items on the Campus Resources Screen.

Finally, our student affairs division opened a new student veteran's lounge located in the student union. The new central location within the campus and upgraded furnishings has been well received. We appreciate the recognition of U.S. News and World Report for identifying our commitment to military veterans by including EIU in their list of Best Colleges for Veterans.

An important element of Eastern's Vitalization has been the development of new academic degree programs and broadening the delivery methods of some others – (especially graduate programs) - that have the potential to impact enrollment growth. Our newest programs approved by the Board of Trustees include a B.S. in Health Administration, M.S. in Athletic Training, B.S. in Electrical Engineering, and B.A. in Television and Video Production.

By my unofficial count, I believe we have added no less than 17 new academic programs to our curriculum since 2015. And this number does not reflect the numerous new minors and other options that have been added since that time. As envisioned, these additions have drawn increased interest by prospective students to explore our institution.

In my previous State of the University addresses, I have noted the extraordinary success of our graduate school in developing innovative ways that support enrollment growth. Notably, the transition of many graduate programs to include online delivery tracks.

This past year, Dean Hendrickson and his Graduate School leadership team contemplated the idea of adding accelerated graduate programs that would allow current undergraduate students to receive their baccalaureate and master's degrees in a shortened span of time. The benefits of reduced time and cost were thought engaging factors that could stimulate increased enrollments.

The idea was presented to the Graduate Program Coordinators and Department Chairs for consideration, and I'm pleased to announce that the University has approved an accelerated master's degree policy and has launched 10 accelerated graduate programs this semester. I truly believe, it is this kind of innovative thought, combined with the willingness of our faculty and academic administrators to be adaptable to new ideas that will ultimately ensure the continued strength, success and sustainability of our University. My appreciation goes out to Dean Hendrickson, his staff, our graduate program coordinators and all involved with our disciplines offering graduate programs.

Undoubtedly, the biggest and most impactful Vitalization initiative we've undertaken over the past year was the realignment of our academic affairs division. As formally stated by Provost Gatrell, the realignment serves to support students and EIU's signature learning experience; enhance the competitiveness of EIU through new programs; advance the mission of the institution and celebrate outstanding high-quality programs; reassert the University's position as Illinois' preeminent regional comprehensive institution; and assure financial viability through increased enrollments and revenue.

The realignment plan was presented to the Board of Trustees and approved in June 2018 and subsequently approved by the Illinois Board of Higher Education in July. With the realignment, we introduced a totally new college – the College of Health and Human Services; two new schools – the School of the Arts and School of Communication and Journalism; and merged our College of Arts and Humanities with the College of Sciences into the single largest college on EIU's campus – demonstrating a strong proclamation of our university's commitment to the importance of a broad-based, traditional liberal arts and general education foundation.

Two of our colleges, the College of Education and Professional Studies and the Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences were refocused to heighten their visibility and sharpen their mission into the College of Education and the Lumpkin College of Business and Technology. And finally, the realignment merged various offices of student academic support resources within a unified Academic Success Center located at Ninth Street Hall.

The enhancements of our academic realignment are both exciting and strategic. I have no doubt they will achieve the beneficial outcomes envisioned by the Vitalization Workgroup, Student Success Task Force and other entities that provided important and substantial feedback including the Provost's Leadership Council, Council of Chairs and Faculty Senate. Thank you once again to all involved for working so diligently to realign our academic affairs division to be proactively positioned for future enrollment growth and success.

Each year at this time, I am honored to share some of the most significant collective and individual honors and accomplishments we've achieved during the previous year. The first of which is reflective of our entire university and its high standing in the academic community. Once again, U.S. News and World Report has ranked Eastern Illinois University the top public regional university in the state. Furthermore, we jumped from 8th-best to 5th-best public regional university in our entire 12-state Midwestern Region. Other independent rankings confirm our outstanding ability to achieve our educational mission while being both accessible and affordable to our students.

According to Washington Monthly, Eastern Illinois University ranks as the top Master's Institution in Illinois and as the Midwest's #6 ranked "Best Bang for the Buck University." College Consensus, a college review aggregator, recognized EIU as the Most Affordable University in Illinois for 2018. And, we were also named the state's top regional online university by BestColleges.com based on academic rigor, our low faculty-to-student ratio, and the access it gives students to online opportunities in myriad disciplines.

Our home town of Charleston was acknowledged last year as the second-safest college town in the nation by the safewise.com organization and the 3rd-most affordable college town in the nation according to CBS News Money Watch. We are indeed fortunate to have Charleston as our community partner, as well as surrounding communities that invest in our shared regional interests. In this vein, you may also be aware of the tremendous local support from area businesses that contributed to our Community Ambassador Scholarship, which provided the university with more than \$121,000 in scholarship funds this past year for prospective students living within a 60-mile radius of EIU. Just as we invest in our students, our surrounding communities continue to invest in us, and we thank them for their dedication to our mutual growth and success.

The threshold for demonstrating best practices in many academic disciplines is the attainment and continuation of accreditation by an independent national accreditor. As anyone who has gone through the process knows, it can be a very time consuming, arduous and a collaborative task to meet sets of prescribed standards (that seem to change every few years by the accrediting body), assuring appropriate assessments are in place, and preparing the assessment data into a self-study report prior to the accrediting review.

Each year, multiple EIU programs go through their individual reaccreditations. This past year, successful reaccreditations were received for our dietetics, education and music programs. Congratulations to these programs and the faculty and department chairs who were involved in the accreditation process.

Our Office of Research and Sponsored Projects continued their efforts in assisting numerous faculty and staff with generating successful research and service proposals. This past year, EIU received approximately \$3.5 million in external funding. Forty-five proposals were submitted and 35 proposals received awards. This is an extremely high rate of success (78 percent) and I encourage all of our faculty and staff to continue and increase the number of research and service proposals submitted. The benefits of acquiring external research and service dollars to our university, to your own research and service activities, and to our students is extraordinary on multiple levels.

The college that submitted the most proposals this past year was the College of Science, and the College that received the most award funding was the Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences.

I would like to take a moment to spotlight one of our awarded proposals for its pertinence to EIU's history and institutional mission. The College of Education Dean's Office received a grant for \$115,774 from the Illinois Board of Higher Education to address the teacher shortage in Illinois. The so-called "Grow Your Own Grant" will work with local schools and other partners to find ways to increase the number of qualified teachers who graduate from EIU and stay in Illinois to teach. The deficit of qualified teachers in Illinois and across the nation is increasing, having already reached critical levels. EIU, known for its excellence in teaching teachers, is poised to make a significant contribution to addressing the state's teacher deficit. I would like to thank Brad Reid and Doug Bower for submitting the grant and we all look forward to your success in helping Eastern to address this important statewide challenge.

Our faculty experienced another excellent year of scholarly productivity, altogether publishing eight books, 123 peer-reviewed journal articles and 13 book chapters. In the area of creative activities, faculty from our new School of the Arts had their work displayed or presented in a substantial array of art exhibitions, musical performances, musical recordings, and professional theatrical activities. It is important to note that many of these research and creative activities involved collaboration with students, reaffirming EIU's commitment to

providing unique and engaging research opportunities for our graduate and undergraduate scholars. I congratulate our outstanding faculty for their research and creative accomplishments.

Once again, EIU's Civic Engagement and Volunteerism Office showed us what it means to be service leaders. Last year, Eastern students contributed about 130,000 total volunteer and service hours, averaging approximately 18 hours per student. That is really an incredible number! And if we apply the state of Illinois volunteer equivalency factor, the value in service to our local and surrounding communities comes out to be about \$3.25 million.

And it's not just our students that give back to the community. Numerous faculty and staff members across our campus provide community service to a variety of civic and non-profit organizations. This past year, Mark Hudson, Director of University Housing and Dining was awarded a Jefferson Award for Public Service for his long record of community involvement, especially in the area of youth leadership. Congratulations Mark.

It is always a pleasure to acknowledge the noteworthy work of our students in their academic and sport competitions. Here are a few examples from last year. The Department of Health Promotion's Undergraduate Case Study Team won third place at the 2018 national society for Public Health Education's tournament.

Finance students in the School of Business, coached by Crystal Lin, traveled to New York City to participate in the Quinnipiac University's G.A.M.E. Conference. EIU placed second in competition among all student-managed growth funds. You may not know this, but our finance students manage about \$500k of our university's endowment and I'm pleased and very relieved to say they routinely beat their benchmark indices.

Our student-athletes had a strong year in their competitive sports. All but two sports qualified for their conference tournament and participated in post-season play. Our men's basketball team received a special ruling by the NCAA to host an additional exhibition game with proceeds going to disaster relief. We hosted the University of Illinois and in front of a sold-out crowd in our Lantz arena, our men's team defeated Illinois 80-67 in convincing fashion.

Two student-athletes earned All-American honors, Haleigh Knapp in Track and Mark Williams in Football. Haleigh is only the second EIU women's track athlete to ever earn NCAA Division I All-American honors. And during the season, Mark was on the watch list for the Jerry Rice Award, which is presented to the nation's top FCS Freshman player. Congratulations to Haleigh and Mark.

And finally, we may have a small EIU speech team, but it is a darn good one. Last March, the team traveled to the University of Nebraska, the host institution for the National Speech Championship. Among all of the excellent performances of our team members, Edwyn Mitchell, a current senior from Flossmoor, IL and president of the EIU speech team, represented us at the highest level, becoming the NSC National Champion in Persuasive Speaking for the second consecutive year! He also placed third in the nation in Poetry Interpretation and was national quarter-finalist in the category of Informative Speaking. Congratulations to Director of Forensics Sara Gronstal, Edwyn Mitchell and our entire EIU Speech Team.

Not to be undone, our outstanding faculty achieved significant accomplishments all year long. Here are but a few examples. Paul Switzer, professor of biological sciences, founded the Urban Butterfly Initiative, which works in urban areas to enhance beauty, biodiversity, and environmental awareness by changing urban spaces into vibrant butterfly habitats. The initiative is international in scope, working on projects with government and nongovernment organizations in India and right here in Coles County. I've mentioned to Dr. Switzer that I'd love to see Charleston become the butterfly capital of the United States. He tells me he's working on it!

Roger Beck, Distinguished Emeritus Professor of History was named "Pioneer in World History" by the World History Association for his lifetime achievements. Dr. Beck is the author and co-author of several world history

and African history textbooks, including the widely used World History: Pattern of Interaction and A History of World Societies. Congratulations to Dr. Beck.

Two EIU faculty served as Fulbright Scholars. David Gracon, associate professor in the School of Communication and Journalism, taught media studies at the Precarpathian National University in Ivano Frankivsk, Ukraine. And, Frances Murphy, professor in the Department of Human Services and Community Leadership, taught in the graduate social work program at the Universitatea Liberiana Internationala in the Republic of Moldova. There's no disputing that receiving a Fulbright Scholar award is an incredible accomplishment for any academic and I congratulate Drs. Gracon and Murphy in joining the prestigious group of other EIU faculty who have achieved this success in past years.

John Cabage, assistant professor in the School of Technology, has spearheaded a joint degree program in collaboration with Shenyang Urban Construction University in Shenyang, China. For the past two summers, Dr. Cabage has been teaching at the Shenyang University and was joined by EIU professor of technology Rigoberto Chinchilla in summer 2018. The first three Chinese students of the 3+1 program are now on our campus this fall. Enrollment growth is expected soon for this innovative program.

Finally, this year once again we learned of the naming of a recently discovered species after one of our faculty. Zhiwei Liu, professor of biological science, was honored by his colleagues for his many achievements in research and commitment to biodiversity by the naming of a new species of gall wasp. *Dryocosmus liui*.

I hope everyone in this room and everyone across campus feels proud for what we have accomplished this past year and for that matter, the past three years. We weathered the worst storm that the state of Illinois has ever conjured up, we vitalized our campus from its appearance to its academic organization, we told the EIU story like we have never told it before, and we accomplished enrollment gains in an environment in which most of our peers could not.

We did this together, and we did this as family. Sacrifices did, and still exist in the workloads and resource support of many of our faculty and staff. Please know the administration clearly understands this and as we continue our recovery from the impasse and previous multi-year slide in enrollments, we do have a plan to add, not just replace, faculty and critical staff slowly over the next several years and to similarly increase the level of faculty development funding for professional travel, research and classroom needs.

However, I call upon you to continue to be patient. Yes, the state impasse is over, but the deleterious effects of the past years cannot be reversed overnight. Even so, we have made the very difficult turn to positive enrollment growth and improved our budgetary position over last year. We should celebrate these gains as they are milestones of our advancement forward on our Pathway to Success.

This is a great time to be a Panther. And if we (the faculty, staff, students, alums and other friends of the university) continue to demonstrate the same high level of energy, focus, and determination next year as we have in the past three years, I have no doubt we will be celebrating even greater gains in Fall 2019.

Our focus for this year will once again be guided by our Vitalization Plan. We will continue to seek out efficiencies and continue a well-monitored and conservative stewardship of our limited resources.

This year we will be laser-focused once again on student recruitment of all student learner groups – undergraduate, graduate, first time, transfer, traditional, adult-learners, on-campus, online, domestic and international. We will need the same enthusiasm and collaboration of the entire campus that was shown last year for us to leverage our momentum and hit our enhanced enrollment targets for Fall 2019. I am very confident that we can do so!

We have invested the same level of strategic funding for marketing this year as we did last year. We learned that telling the EIU story of quality and value to a broader audience has resulted in more applications and interest. We have always known that when prospective students visit our campus, they love what they see and learn, but we have needed marketing, absent in our past, to continue to increase university awareness throughout the state and beyond. We are all tasked with reminding students, parents, and anyone who will listen that EIU exists as an excellent, first-choice option in Illinois higher education.

Several changes occurred last year related to our focus on student success and retention. As mentioned earlier, we worked to create the Student Success Center on Ninth Street. This focus will continue with the implementation of additional initiatives to boost EIU's retention and graduation rates. Over the next few years, we have set the goal to increase our first year retention rate to between 77 and 80 percent and our six-year graduation rate (six-year being the standard for university comparisons) to over 60 percent. We have accomplished both of these rates in the past and I believe we can do so again with the right student supports in place.

This year will see construction and maintenance upgrades taking place on the EIU campus to continue the vitalization of our grounds and facilities. As mentioned earlier, projects that have been approved include the completion of the Lantz south stairs and the completion of the elevator projects at McAfee and Student Services buildings. You will also be seeing an exterior remodel of the bridge façade between the east and west student union buildings, painting of the Doudna exterior, refresh of the Roberson Auditorium in Lumpkin Hall, HVAC maintenance in Old Main, and several other projects across campus.

Twenty-two faculty and three administrative leadership searches have been approved for this year. Deans and department chairs have been notified and several searches are already underway. The three administrative searches for Vice President of University Advancement, Dean of the College of Health and Human Services and Dean of the Lumpkin College of Business and Technology have begun the search process.

We will continue to be All-In for our students creating opportunities and providing a supportive and positive learning and living environment. And we will not lose sight of our educational mission and our continued commitment and support of academic excellence.

Eastern Illinois University is definitely on the move. And, although we are certainly not yet where we want to be, we can see and feel the tangible progress we have already made. I am so proud of our campus and our most precious resource, our EIU employees. I am humbled and beyond appreciative to serve as president of our beloved university. And equally appreciative of the full support and confidence provided to me by our Board of Trustees.

I am confident that this year will be a great one for EIU, and even more confident that next year will be even better. Thank you for your trust in this administration. Working together, our future achievements are bound only by the limits of our collective imaginations as we propel EIU toward its brightest future.

Thank you.