



## **State of the University Address**

### **Eastern Illinois University**

**September 29, 2022**

David M. Glassman, Ph.D.

Good afternoon.

Good afternoon and welcome to our Fall 2022 State of the University Address. It is always my pleasure to share with you the current position, recent accomplishments, and upcoming goals of our outstanding University.

Before doing so, I would like to welcome all new faculty, staff and students who have recently joined our EIU community.

Will all faculty and staff who have joined us in the last year please rise? We thank you for joining our Eastern Illinois University community and I wish you the utmost success. I'm confident you will find EIU to be an inclusive, supportive, collegial, and gratifying community.

I am delighted to introduce three new members of our leadership team. First, Mr. Matt Bierman, who joined us in July as vice president of business affairs. Matt comes to us most recently from Illinois Wesleyan University where he served as chief financial officer. We are extremely fortunate to have a VPBA who has experience and knowledge of the business processes of Illinois public universities. Please join me in welcoming Matt Bierman to EIU.

Second, we welcome Ms. Marisol Gamboa, who joined EIU as our Chief of University Police in January 2022. Chief Gamboa comes to us from San Jacinto Community College in Texas where she served as an administrative lieutenant. Since her arrival, she has focused the department on increased community policing efforts and on strengthening relationships with the EIU community. Please welcome Chief Gamboa.

Finally, I would like to welcome our new Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, Dr. John Storsved. Dr. Storsved is no stranger to EIU. He served as a faculty member in the Department of Kinesiology from 2010 – 2016. Since then, he has been at Millikin University serving as Director of the School of Exercise Science and Sport. We are so very glad to welcome John back to the Panther family. Let's all welcome Dr. Storsved.

I had really hoped at this time to be introducing another individual who would be joining us this fall, but unfortunately, our first search for a senior diversity, equity, and inclusion officer was unsuccessful. I view this position as critical to our university's commitment to DEI and our Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative. I have reactivated the search committee and will begin advertising the position shortly. I am confident we will have a senior DEI officer at EIU before the end of the academic year. In the meantime, I will continue to rely on the excellent guidance from members of the president's advisory committee for DEI issues and activities. I would like to thank the current members. -- Drs. Mona Davenport, Sace Elder, Catherine Polydore, Shawn Peoples, Heather Webb, and University Police Chief Marisol Gamboa.

Our last academic year was another challenging one with the ever-changing pandemic environment. Our ability to limit campus transmission was aided by access to weekly surveillance testing of all unvaccinated students and employees, new vaccines, and effective treatments.

Partnering with the SHIELD testing program developed by the University of Illinois was a game changer for EIU and we acknowledge their excellent scientific response to developing a test that is more accurate, more comfortable to administer, and with rapid, 24-hour results. And we are most grateful to the Governor's Office for providing funding to cover the material costs of our SHIELD testing.

There are countless individuals to thank for their part in assisting the university in navigating through the pandemic, and it would be impossible to name them all. In fact, every individual in the EIU community helped in ways large and small for us to achieve success. I'm sure I'm missing some very important groups, but I'd like to give a shout-out to the following departments and units for their extraordinary and critical efforts: EIU's BSW's and administrative staff, Student Medical Center, HERC, Procurement Office, Human Resources Office, Associate Deans, Academic Chairs, EIU faculty, UMAC, and Housing and Dining Services. Thank you all.

Despite the magnitude of attention and resources required to manage the health of our campus community through the pandemic, we had an exceptionally productive year. I would like to share a few examples from each of our divisions beginning with business affairs. The true unsung heroes of our campus are often behind the scenes keeping our university operations flowing smoothly and our campus clean and beautiful. They rarely get the congratulatory recognition they deserve. This past year our building service workers did an outstanding job creating physical distance in the classrooms, disinfecting offices and classrooms, and keeping our buildings as clean as possible. Our groundskeepers were focused on improving the appearance of university landscaping and I believe everyone can agree they have done an outstanding job.

Our plumbers completed 2,677 work orders, while our electricians completed over 3,000 maintenance work orders. Our painters were busy painting 9<sup>th</sup> Street Hall for the new nursing program, the walls and trim at the Tarble Arts Center, and many of the rooms and hallways in the McAfee basement following the department reorganization of that space. Our brick masons had a long year of remedying water infiltration at Booth Library, Lumpkin Hall, and the Lincoln and Powell-Norton residence halls. And I would like to send my deepest thanks to our carpentry and labor shop, who on extremely short notice, transformed the Subway food station into a Sushi bar in the University Food Court to the pleasure of many students, faculty, and staff.

Every day our business operation offices are busy behind the scenes working to keep our university running effectively and efficiently. Information Technology Services is one such unit. Not only did our IT team keep our communication technologies running smoothly and securely this past year, the staff also took on additional projects for systems and instructional improvements such as implementing a multi-factor authentication solution for our faculty, staff, and EIU annuitants, upgrading Wi-fi in 467 residence hall rooms, and completing 14,445 IT-related work tickets.

I would like to single out a special member of our business affairs division for his extraordinary efforts last year, Mr. Lakshmikara Padmaraju, interim director of Planning, Budget, and Institutional Research, amicably known as Raju to all in Old Main. Raju used his programming skills to create and implement an online Personnel Authorization Request (PAR) system, resulting in a more streamlined and efficient process than the antiquated paper process we had been using. As soon as he

completed that project, he began collaborating with the procurement and accounts payable office to create a similar online transition for our travel request and reimbursement system, which were completed by the end of the Spring semester. Thank you, Raju, for your steadfast efforts and success in moving those EIU business processes into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Our student affairs division was kept busy last year with myriad programs presented for the benefit and enjoyment of our students through the offices of student life, recreation, civic engagement and volunteerism, and fraternities and sororities. Staff in our student medical and counseling centers were exceptional in their efforts to meet the needs of our students' physical, mental, and emotional health.

Once again, our housing and dining services worked heroically to deliver a positive experience for our students, carefully managing the peaks and valleys of a pandemic while diligently working to restore some sense of "normalcy." The Great Lakes Association of College and University Housing Officers honored Jeremy Alexander, Associate Director of Housing and Dining, with its Service Award, and Beccah Maley, EIU's Living Learning Community Coordinator, was honored with the Outstanding Research and Writing Award for her thesis titled "Student-Centered Learning Spaces During a Pandemic". Congratulations to both of them.

Our student affairs division was instrumental in the creation of a long-anticipated EIU Campus Food Pantry to assist EIU students in addressing food inequity and insecurity. During its first year, the pantry provided 8,613 meals to 540 unique students. The pantry itself, is run by student volunteers – 301 of them last year -- and is supported 100 percent through grants and donations. It is an inspiring example of students helping students.

Another first for EIU occurred through the collaborative efforts of Residential Life, the student Pride organization, the Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity, University Advancement, and the Office of Student Affairs. Together, the Doug DiBianco Community opened in Fall 2021 in McKinney Hall as the University's first gender-inclusive residential community. It was met with such interest and enthusiasm by our LGBTQA+ community, the space was expanded to the second floor of McKinney this Fall.

Turning our attention now to intercollegiate athletics, EIU has a history of student-athlete excellence on the field and in the classroom. This past year, our men's cross-country team won the OVC championship for the ninth time and our

baseball team had the most wins in a season since 1999. EIU students Dustin Hatfield and Lindsey Carlson were named the men's and women's top OVC Athletes of the Year. This is only the second time in OVC history that a school has had both winners in the same year. Congratulations to Dustin and Lindsey.

In the classroom, EIU led the OVC in the number of Academic Medal of Honor Award winners as well as the OVC Commissioner's Honor Roll selections. The average GPA of our student-athletes in Fall 2021 was a 3.29 with 23 percent achieving a perfect 4.0 and 69 percent with a 3.0 or higher. In Spring 2022, the average GPA was again 3.29 with 24 percent of student-athletes achieving a 4.0 and 73 percent finished with a 3.0 or higher. There is no question our student-athletes are among EIU's very best students. What a superb balancing act they have achieved!

EIU's division of university advancement is responsible for alumni engagement and our philanthropy efforts associated with the EIU foundation. Myriad activities hosted by our alumni affairs office kept EIU alumnae connected and updated to the accomplishments of their alma mater. Participation at these events often exceeded our expectations.

In the area of philanthropic gifts and donations, the EIU-Foundation received over \$7 million, which is one of the highest single-year totals in university history. Much of the funds are restricted for student scholarships and are quite literally game changers for so many prospective and returning EIU students. These funds help us step out of the box with programs like the Panther Retention Program, geared toward assisting low-income students of good academic standing with their account balances so they may persist forward on their journey to graduation.

Next, let's move on to the heart of our university, the division of academic affairs, which witnessed its own abundance of achievement across the colleges and academic affairs units. According to Provost Gatrell, FY22 was a banner year for external grants and contracts. I absolutely agree and join him in congratulating all the faculty and staff who submitted grant and contract proposals. Collectively, we were awarded nearly \$6 million -- the largest aggregate total during my seven-year tenure at Eastern. A total of 34 awards were received with an average award amount of \$176,077. The Chemistry and Biochemistry Department submitted the most grant applications, and the Department of Biological Sciences had the most grants awarded.

Although you can witness a lot of work taking place on the northern exterior of Booth Library, much more is happening inside its doors. For example, the Booth Library was awarded a grant from the National Library of Medicine to implement a health literacy program in the Southeastern region of Illinois. The multidisciplinary project spearheaded by Stacey Knight-Davis, Booth Librarian; Dr. Lauri DeRuiter-Wilhelms, Department of Public Health and Nutrition; Dr. Beth Gill, School of Communication and Journalism; and Kim Ross and Carrie Wennerdahl, digital health coordinators, created a virtual training module including videos and resources on various health literacy topics for local public libraries and community organizations.

The Lumpkin College of Business and Technology launched a new Student Hub for Engagement, Leadership, and Professionalism with the addition of an Engagement Coordinator. The Hub is already demonstrating positive returns as measured by an improvement in student early course registrations, the number of students taking summer internships for credit, and improved student retention.

Congratulations to our School of Technology's Student Robotics Team led by Dr. Wutthigrai Boonsuk. The team made up of students Aleigh Crowder, Caden Miller, and Ian Centers -- placed second in the Sumo-Robot Contest at the National Robotics Competition in Marion, Ohio.

EIU's College of Education is making tremendous strides in outreach, rural engagement and increasing efforts to address the teacher shortage in Illinois. The American Council on Rural Special Education awarded EIU's Special Education Department the Exemplary Program Award for the category of Preservice/Inservice Preparation Programs. Congratulations to all involved.

Twenty-four rising high school seniors spent three weeks living on campus during the summer as they participated in the College of Education's innovative Minority Teacher in Enrichment Program. Each student completed the three-credit hour

course: The Whole Child: Teaching and Learning in the Educational Environment. In addition, the students completed 30 hours of practicum.

Last year, EIU faculty began offering upper division courses to inmates at the Danville Correctional Center as a pathway for individuals who have associate degrees to progress toward a baccalaureate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. In the Spring, we had our first student graduate from the program. We celebrated the event with a complete commencement ceremony presided by EIU administrators in full regalia. When we say we are All In for All our students, EIU means just that. The Danville program had measurable success in its first year and enrollment doubled for this Fall.

Over in the College of Health and Human Services, a synergistic reorganization took place with the faculty of the nutrition and dietetics program joining the faculty of the Department of Public Health to create EIU's new Department of Public Health and Nutrition. This merger adds another layer of opportunity for enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration in the many communal areas of community health care and management.

The Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences has expanded available services through the Autism Center with a successful Tap grant. These new services augment the very successful STEP program offered by the department that supports individuals on the spectrum with navigating the higher education environment as EIU students.

Working with the College of Education, the Department of Human Services is collaborating to assist and support workers in early childhood fields who have an associate of applied science degree to earn a bachelor's degree in Early Education from EIU. These activities are part of the state-wide Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity that was created through state legislation.

Our largest academic college, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences had a superb year of accomplishments spanning all the way from anthropology to zoology. The Department of Biology received a \$186,000 grant written by Drs. Eric Bollinger, Rob Columbo and Eden Effert-Fanta for a long-term fish population monitoring program in the Wabash River.

Dr. Julie Campbell, professor of English, completed her translation of *Lovers Debates for the Stage* by Italian Renaissance actress and author Isabella Andreini, which will soon be featured in performance by the Chicago Shakespeare Project this fall.

Dr. Ryan Burge, assistant professor of political science, continues to garner national media attention with his excellent books *The Nones* published in 2021 and his second book, *20 Myths about Religion and Politics in America*, published last March. Congratulations to Ryan.

And, Dr. Camden Burd, assistant professor of history, started hosting episodes of “Heartland Histories,” the official podcast of the Midwest History Association. The podcasts offer a great example of how historians and others can use digital media to reach diverse audiences.

It takes just a quick glance at the annual Doudna Fine Arts Center season calendar and the Tarble Arts Center’s exhibition schedule to get a sense of the incredible work and accomplishments occurring among our performing and fine arts faculty and students. Not a week goes by in the entire academic year that doesn’t see these artists showcase their talents. From band, symphony, ensembles, choral and theatre performances to student and faculty art exhibitions, our arts programs bring an additional depth of culture to our community and region. And notable among our art students is M.A. student Kadey Ambrose, who was selected by the American Craft Council as one of 10 artists among a national pool of over 550 applicants to be invited into the prestigious 2022 Emerging Artists Cohort.

Finally, I’d like to congratulate the graduate school for their continuous creative and innovative ways to help our students complete a graduate degree. Their accelerated master’s programs and the more recent pathway that makes pursuing a second master’s degree at EIU more attractive have been very successful.

The Graduate School, in collaboration with our Office of International Students and Scholars led by Andy Kabasele, and the School of Technology’s Dr. David Melton and Dr. Rigoberto Chinchilla, have been instrumental in increasing our international student enrollment and expanding EIU’s reach and reputation as a global university.

Well -- although it’s taken me more than a few minutes to showcase all of these exceptional accomplishments, they only scratch the surface of examples that take place every day on our campus. Thank you all for your outstanding contributions that make this university great.



Now, let's turn our attention forward to looking at our state of the university and our collective goals for FY23.

When I am out in public, I'm continuously greeted with the same two questions: How is enrollment looking for the fall and how do the football and basketball teams look this year? I'm always hoping to be able to respond the same way, "even better than last year!". But before taking a deep dive into this year's enrollment data, I would like to acknowledge the leadership and staff of the enrollment management and admissions offices. You provide the strategy and guidance for our recruitment efforts and all of us in our EIU community are willing to roll up our sleeves and get involved to help. Will all individuals in enrollment management, the office of undergraduate admissions, the office of international students and scholars, and individuals involved in graduate student recruitment please stand? Thank you for your incredible dedication and success. I know you are already hard at work recruiting the class of Fall 2023.

For Fall 2022, our university's headcount stands at 8,857 compared to 8,608 last year for an increase of 2.9 percent. Areas responsible for this growth include an 11 percent increase in first-time full-time freshman from 777 to 863, and an increase in international student enrollment by a wonderfully strong 92 percent. I am pleased to share we have enrolled the largest number of international students ever in Eastern's history! 766 international students have joined the EIU community representing over 50 countries. The exciting influx of international students has also resulted in achieving the largest number of graduate students ever enrolled at EIU. This Fall our graduate enrollment grew 14.4 percent to 1,941 graduate students compared to 1,661 in Fall 2021.

Our newest freshmen class is academically strong with an average GPA of 3.44. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> straight year that the incoming class had a higher average GPA than the previous, demonstrating that EIU's brand continues to get stronger each year. I know Dean England is ecstatic as our incoming freshman class has 246 students who are Honors eligible - an increase of 26 percent over last year. I'm sure he will happily replenish his tea supply for his regular Honors gatherings with these special students.

It was a delight to welcome our Fall 2022 freshmen with a traditional Move-in Day and an array of Welcome Week activities. The excitement was palpable! What a difference it was from our past two years during the pandemic. Those involved in planning summer orientations and Welcome Week did an exceptional job in

creating a memorable experience for our newest students. It takes a whole cadre of student affairs staff, faculty, academic advisors, along with a small army of students to coordinate these events and they accomplished it perfectly. Thank you.

There were two areas of enrollment that presented challenges for us this year. First, our transfer student enrollment fell 5.4 percent from last year. This decline, similarly seen at many universities across the country, is attributable to a significant drop in community college enrollments nationwide. With a very strong job market and rising starting salaries due to demand for workers, many prospective and returning students at community colleges have decided to pivot and enter the labor force instead.

Our second enrollment challenge occurred in our Spring to Fall freshman retention rate that fell by two percent. Despite all our best efforts of support – academic, financial, social, and emotional -- last year was difficult for our freshmen as the pandemic lingered on and detracted from their authentic EIU experience. With the pandemic mostly behind us and our newest student success supports in place, we are confident our freshmen retention rate will rebound quickly.

Overall, we had an excellent recruiting year at EIU. Of course, we had hoped for even larger gains, but all of us know that will come with time and the sustained effort by our entire EIU community. Our commitment to our students defines our brand, and with success and positive experiences on campus, our students and future alumni become our most impactful influencers for future enrollments.

Since enrollment and our state appropriations determine our financial position, this is a good segue to discuss our University's FY23 budget and the state of university finances. As we have done for the last four years in a row, we have met our critical goal of a balanced annual income fund budget where expenses have not exceeded our revenues. The university is now operating within its means, and we can proudly state we are financially stable and on a pathway towards long-term sustainability. Most end of year excess funds have been utilized to help build back the university's designated fund balances – or reserves --that were decimated during the state's two-year budget impasse that began in FY16. This replenishment has not yet reached its pre-impasse level and will need to continue to grow, otherwise leaving the university vulnerable to any major unexpected challenges to the university's finances. Nevertheless, we recognize that any excess funds and budget planning must also be balanced with our other institutional priorities of employee and infrastructure investments.

For FY22, our state appropriation was originally approved at \$41.4 million with no increase over FY21. However, during the Spring 2022 session, the legislature enacted a five-percent supplemental appropriation for public universities, which was signed by Governor Pritzker. This amounted to an additional \$2.1 million for a total FY22 appropriation of \$43.5 million. Our appropriation for this year, FY23, is the same as last year at \$43.5 million. It should be noted that the five percent increase we received does not translate as a five-percent increase in our total income budget, but only the state appropriated portion of it. It also has no effect on our local fund budget that is responsible for resourcing EIU's auxiliary operations such as housing and dining, MLK Jr. Student Union, EIU's Recreation Center, Student Medical Center, and other operations.

With acknowledgement to oversimplification, the 10<sup>th</sup> day enrollment numbers are in and we know the level of our state appropriation, consequently we can finalize our FY23 income budget. After accounting for, calculating, and covering all university operational expenses, any excess revenue can be deployed to investments in our human resources, infrastructure, deferred maintenance, student financial aid, and strategic building of our cash reserves. Each of these areas are vital and each must be supported. Our most critical fiscal responsibility remains ensuring our spending does not exceed or outpace our revenue for this year or any year.

My apologies for the added time here, but I believe it is critically important to share some financial history of our university, including how it continues to affect us today, and the lessons we've learned in preparing for our future. At the time of EIU's highest enrollment, exceeding 12,000 students in the mid-2000's, the university built itself up in faculty and staff across campus and was able to provide salary increases of 3 to 5 percent. Department budgets were robust for purchasing new equipment, supplies and providing travel funds, and monies were available for maintenance projects across campus.

The apex of our enrollment occurred in 2006 and was followed by 11 consecutive years of enrollment decline from 12,349 students to 7,030 students, a reduction of 43 percent. To make matters even more financially challenging, annual reductions were occurring in our state appropriations as the state continued de-investing in higher education.

By the time I joined EIU in 2015, EIU's annual expenses had been exceeding our revenues, and we were using cash reserves, which were diminishing rapidly, to balance our income budget. It was imperative that major changes occur to reduce

our spending immediately including the reduction of university employees to reflect the large revenue losses from the reduction in enrollment and from the State's reduced appropriations. Exacerbating this challenge, the state's budgetary impasse, which began on my first day as president, further disadvantaged our financial position by providing only 30 percent of our anticipated appropriation in FY16. The result led to disheartening, but necessary layoffs impacting approximately 300 dedicated employees over two years.

While I do not look back on those times with any envy, I am incredibly proud of how our university was able to pull together and successfully emerge in achieving balanced income fund budgets, broader financial stability, and a return to a position of incremental financial improvement over the last four years. In 2016, the university engaged in its most recent campus-wide strategic planning, which led to the development and implementation of the EIU Vitalization Plan. Since then, executive decisions related to university finances have strictly adhered to the principles of the Plan. The basic elements of the plan were firstly, to make strategic investments and other changes that would reverse our 11-year enrollment downslide and grow our enrollments through greater competitiveness in the market, development of new undergraduate and graduate programs sought out by prospective students, and greater outreach to new groups of learners – including those looking for online graduate programs, international student opportunities, and even high school dual-credit instruction. Secondly, we committed ourselves to innovative activities that would make our operations more efficient and allow us to exist in a culture of conservative spending until we could sustain balanced income fund budgets. I considered this to be our Pathway to Success as presented in my State of the University Address of 2016.

Collectively, passionately, and conscientiously, we brought our university forward on this Pathway. And here are the results. Over the past six years, our enrollment has grown 26 percent from 7,030 students to 8,857 with four of the past five years having increased enrollments over the previous fall. The only year we did not achieve a year over year increase was last fall -- at the height of the pandemic -- and even then, we were down in headcount by only 18 students. We have so much to be proud of, but we need to remember what got us here.

A new challenge is on the horizon. Beginning in FY25 and continuing for the next several years there will be a demographic cliff in the number of students in the United States of typical freshman age. This drop, estimated to be about 15 percent, is

the result of lower birth rates that occurred during the period of the Great Recession beginning in 2008. You can only imagine the intensity it will cause in the nationwide recruitment efforts of college-ready students. All universities, particularly public comprehensive universities and small private colleges and universities will need to navigate strategically through these years.

EIU is in a solid position given our recent diversification of learners among traditional students, online students, high school students, and international students. I am confident EIU will remain strong and stable through this demographic cliff if we remember the financial history of the last decade and continue to adhere to the same strict commitment that guides even our personal budgets -- to never allow annual expenses to exceed any year's revenues.

I realize many of you are frustrated by our institution's fiscally conservative philosophy held by the administration, and that salary increases provided in recent past years have not met your hope or expectation. However, our Pathway to Success and sustainability has been and continues to be dependent upon our commitment to that conservative philosophy. I can assure you we will do our very best to provide salary increases to all our negotiated and non-negotiated employees at the highest level possible without putting our university in financial jeopardy now or in the future. All our university employees across campus, and I mean all, are equally important to our success and no one area can exist without the work of the others.

We are not the university we were seven years ago when I was honored to be selected to lead EIU. We are better, financially stable, academically excellent, with colleges reorganized in a manner that makes sense and supports collaborative synergies. We have begun slowly to work on deferred maintenance projects and have recommitted to the tremendous focus we place on student success and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our 2016 strategic plan guided us well, but a new strategic plan is necessary to guide us over the next five years. It was my vision and the provost's hope that we could initiate the process a year or two ago, but the pandemic has caused its delay.

This will be a very busy year for us as we work to chart our future and identify what and who we wish to become as an institution of higher learning. Four major activities will be taking place on campus simultaneously that will help define our goals and chart our course. Firstly, we will continue our work implementing EIU's HLC quality initiative project of diversifying Eastern's faculty and staff, including the hiring of a Senior DEI officer. Secondly, we've begun preparing for our decennial HLC

reaccreditation. Thirdly, we will be creating our new 2023-2028 EIU Strategic Plan. And lastly, the university community will be identifying its next president. There will be multiple opportunities for everyone across campus to participate in these critical activities. I encourage everyone to become involved. This is your chance to lend your important voices to the future direction of the University.

The first steps of the university's next strategic planning process began last Spring with the appointment of a Task Force comprising 17 faculty and staff members representing various units and departments across campus. The Task Force has met several times – both virtually and in person – to coordinate with stakeholders inside and outside the University to identify our top-level mission-centered values. A smaller summer subcommittee also was formed to begin gathering critical external feedback from several of our key university partners. But the bulk of this important work lies with us, focusing our efforts on creating a responsible roadmap and collaborative vision for what success will look like for EIU over the next five years and beyond. Ultimately, these efforts will support EIU in its upcoming reaccreditation process, scheduled to begin in 2025.

A Strategic Planning website has been developed to allow University students, employees, and community members to detail our ongoing progress. In fact, each of you will receive an email later this afternoon with links to the Strategic Planning website. That email will include an invitation to participate in the University's first broad-stroke internal survey to begin collecting initial feedback from our students and employees. This preliminary feedback will supplement two future Town Halls, scheduled for October 18 and 19 here on campus that will assist us in collecting more specific data from students, faculty, and staff. Your participation in these surveys and town halls is vital to the development of EIU's next strategic plan, and I encourage you all to participate where possible and to stay abreast of the Task Force's ongoing progress – including the exact times and locations of our October Town Halls. And finally, should anyone wish to volunteer to serve on the Task Force, please reach out to Professor Grant Sterling or Business Operations Support Specialist Danielle Goehner, who I wish to acknowledge here for helping guide our University through this important process. They are eager to work with each of you to help EIU create a future for itself that everyone can feel proud of and vested in.

Last year, I re-envisioned the Presidential Distinguished Service Award to recognize extraordinary service by members of Eastern's faculty and staff. Recipients, nominated by the EIU community, personify the EIU brand of "All In" and all things

that make EIU such a unique institution. I'm excited to present Awards to five highly deserving individuals, although I understand one or more were unable to attend today's address and will receive their award later. If I call your name, please come up to the podium to be recognized and receive your plaque.

The first awardee is a Building Service Worker who takes deep pride in her work, always going the extra mile to keep her building clean. A nominator commented "she does her very best and it shows. She always comes in with a great attitude that puts a smile on your face, and she creates personal connections with the people not just in our office but in the entire building." Please congratulate Ms. Debra Buell as our first 2022 Presidential Distinguished Service awardee.

The second awardee can be seen day and night capturing the excitement and accomplishments of our student-athletes. She's well known for her welcoming smile and kindness. One nominator put it simply, "She is the best example of school spirit, sacrificial friendship, and general 'positive attitude' found anywhere on campus - and there are a LOT of nice people here." Who is this very nice person? Please join me in congratulating Ms. Sandra King, Graphic Designer and Athletic Photographer for EIU intercollegiate athletics.

One of the nominators of this next awardee comments that he is deserving of this award for all the things he does inside and outside the classroom on behalf of EIU. He's involved in student recruitment, RSO advising, serves on numerous committees, and works as an innovation coach, demonstrating his commitment to service every day. Let's congratulate our third awardee, Mr. Evan Kubicek, instructor of marketing in the Lumpkin College of Business and Technology.

The nominators of our fourth awardee commented that he does tremendous work leading his team. You will always find him problem solving. He can take difficult issues, sometimes pushed by difficult personalities, and find a solution. During the pandemic, he worked to provide 24/7 coverage for making arrangements for students requiring quarantine or isolation housing. Please join me in recognizing Mr. Jody Stone, Senior Associate Director of Housing and Dining for his outstanding service to our university.

Our final awardee has been described as "personifying all that we at EIU work towards and hold dear. She is a selfless and dedicated person. Her knowledge and abilities have no bounds, nor does her dedication to work, and those she works with and for. Her continued support for our department has been tremendous over the

years, as she continues to play a vital role in our success! There is absolutely no one more deserving.” Please help me congratulate Ms. Jenny Stout, Financial Aid Associate Director, for her dedication and personification of being All-In!

Let’s have one more round of applause for our Presidential Distinguished Service Award recipients.

As you know, this will be my last State of the University Address as president of Eastern Illinois University. I want to thank everyone for your friendship and support over these last seven years. Together, we made positive change in our beloved university, and we are absolutely marching forward on that Pathway to Success. Although my presidency came with some VERY unexpected and unprecedented challenges, my choice to lead our university will always remain the highlight of my 43 years in higher education.

I want to thank EIU’s Board of Trustees who allowed me to craft a vision for EIU and supported the difficult decisions that needed to be made throughout my tenure. You can be assured I will continue to work as hard as possible to the end of my term and do all I can to assist with a seamless transition to our incoming leader.

I thank you all, especially my friend and executive assistant, Judy Gorrell. Thank you, Judy! After working as executive assistant to five EIU presidents, you’ve demonstrated amazing adaptability, patience, and perseverance. And I’m sure you’ve seen it all.

To everyone, I wish you a wonderful, productive, and enjoyable year.

Thank you.