

CAMPUS UPDATE



February 2022



A note from the president...

As we have entered a new year and begin moving through the spring semester, I know that many of us can't help but reflect on this as a time of change, a chance for renewal, and an opportunity to make for ourselves a fresh, new beginning. The poet W.S. Merwin further asks us to embrace the new year as a symbol of promise and of hope, encouraging us to consider all that is "still possible."

At this moment, the most significant example of change for ECU comes in the promise of new leadership as we work with our RUSO Board of Regents to conduct a national search for our next president. I am truly humbled and honored to be entrusted to serve as Interim President during the search. But even more so, I am blessed to work alongside a dedicated faculty and staff who, despite the many changes and challenges before them, have remained committed to fulfilling ECU's mission to educate and empower our students to understand and transform our world. ECU has always been a shining example of resilience, and I am confident this same resilience will keep the ECU community moving forward during this period of transition.

Of course, our students may best represent this resilience as they continue to achieve and excel both in and out of the classroom. It is through their continued success, regardless of the many circumstances beyond their control, that we most clearly see the promise, hope, and all that is "still possible" in our future. And it is with this same spirit that we here at ECU will embrace the changes ahead and other opportunities yet to come.



Thank you.

Dr. Jeffrey Gibson
Interim President
East Central University



RUSO Regent Chair Connie Reilly (left) and Interim ECU President Dr. Jeffrey Gibson pose for a picture after employee convocation Jan. 7.

Dr. Gibson named Interim President

The Regional University System of Oklahoma taps ECU Provost Dr. Jeffrey Gibson to serve as interim president.

Gibson has been at ECU since 2020 and will assume presidential duties while the search for the 10th president of ECU is underway. Gibson has brought significant academic and administrative experience to ECU. A tenured professor in English at Wesley College (Dover, Delaware) since 2005, he also held the position of Associate Dean of Curriculum & Program Development and directed the college's Honors Program before being named Provost there in 2015.

Connie Reilly, RUSO regent chair, said, "We will conduct a thorough national search to find the best candidate who is experienced in the particular strengths and opportunities at ECU. RUSO is optimistic that our search will result in a candidate who is well-positioned to lead the university into the future."

Direct Descendant of President Thomas Jefferson to speak at ECU Feb. 22, 2022

In celebration of Black History Month, the ECU Black Alumni Association is proud to present Shannon LaNier at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 22, at ECU. LaNier is an entrepreneur, author, TV personality, social media influencer – and the sixth great-grandson of Thomas Jefferson.

LaNier will bring his motivational humor to Ataloo Theatre in Hallie Brown Ford Fine Arts Center. The event is free and open to the public. He will share his life, touching on everything from his presidential lineage and genealogy to racial equality and his career in media.

LaNier is a direct descendant of the Declaration of Independence author and slave Sally Hemings.



SHANNON LANIER

[SEE LaNier PAGE 8](#)



Call ECU at 580-332-8000!

TIGER TALES

ECU Theatre to present "Hello Dolly!"

ECU Theatre will present the musical "Hello, Dolly!" in February as its spring musical in the Ataloo Theatre inside the Hallie Brown Ford Fine Arts Center.



"Hello, Dolly!" with music and lyrics written by Jerry Herman will be performed at 7:30 p.m. nightly on Feb. 11 and 12, with a 2:30 p.m. Sunday matinee set for Feb. 13. The musical is under the direction of ECU Instructor Vickie Reifsnider, with musical direction by Rudy Lupinski and orchestral direction by Dr. Nick Meyers. Tickets for "Hello, Dolly!" are available at 580-559-5751, at boxoffice@ecok.edu, or from the Hallie Brown Ford Fine Arts Center ticket booth. Prices are \$10 for adults, and \$5 for seniors and children. ECU students and faculty are admitted free.

Food bank receives generous donation

The ECU Foundation recently received an anonymous gift in the amount of \$25,000 toward the advancement of the ECU Food Bank.



The ECU Food Bank provides supplemental food and supplies for students with a monthly box distribution. Each month, the ECU Food Bank provides support for approximately 25-30 students and their families. It was originally established in early 2020, prior to the pandemic's arrival.

The donor has also pledged to match an additional \$25,000 of gifts made over the coming year.

The ECU Food Bank is a collaborative partnership between the University and the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, managed by federal work study students and volunteers. Those interested in donating may do so online at www.givecampus.com/ykmroi or by contacting Buffy Lovelis, ECU Foundation chief operating officer, at blovelis@ecok.edu or 580-559-5655.

Old air finds new life at ECU

Some old air finds new life at ECU thanks to a donation from the City of Ada Fire Department.

"We're glad to be able to donate this equipment where they will get more use in training ECU students," Ada Fire Chief Rob Johnson said. The donation was possible due to a grant to the AFD.



Interim ECU President Dr. Jeffrey Gibson, right, thanks AFD Chief Rob Johnson, left, while Dr. Guy Sewell looks on.

The donation – 12 self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA) and 24 bottles of air – was given to the Environmental Health Science program at ECU to give students hands on training before they graduate.

"This is a great opportunity," Interim ECU President Jeffrey Gibson said. "We appreciate this donation and the relationship ECU has with the City of Ada."

Dr. Guy Sewell, Environmental Health Science professor and Ada City Council member, explained the SCBA units will help students learn the proper use of personal protective equipment and obtain their 40-hour HAZWOPER certificate. HAZWOPER is an acronym that stands for "Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response." This training is useful for careers working with hazardous waste, such as safety and compliance officers or hazardous material tracking and management.

[SEE Air PAGE 8](#)



Color Theory Pollen Show

ECU Students look on at the Color Theory Pollen Show on Dec. 1. Several art works depicting pollen were on display on the Centennial Plaza in front of Hallie Brown Ford Fine Arts Center.





Employees return to campus

Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Jeffrey Gibson addresses ECU's employee convocation as ECU's interim president while the executive council and guests look on. Seated from left are VP of Student Development Brandon Hill, VP of Institutional Advancement Amy T. Ford, RUSO Regent Chair Connie Reilly, VP of Administration and Finance Jessica Kilby, Interim Athletic Director Al Johnson, and CEO of ECU Foundation Inc. John Hargrave. Faculty and Staff received an update in each speaker's area, with high hopes for the spring semester and presidential search. Interpreter Melissa Price, far right, provided ASL for attendees.

Faculty Senate recognizes employees

ECU Faculty Senate President Joe Dougherty presented two ECU employees with commendations, appreciating their areas' hard work. IT Director Jeremy Bennett and Registrar ADeidra Simmons received the commendations after employee convocation on Jan. 7. Faculty Senate expressed their gratitude for the offices' hard work, level of professionalism, and many hours of overtime in transitioning technologies for ECU while exemplifying ECU's core values.



Jeremy Bennett (left) and Joe Dougherty

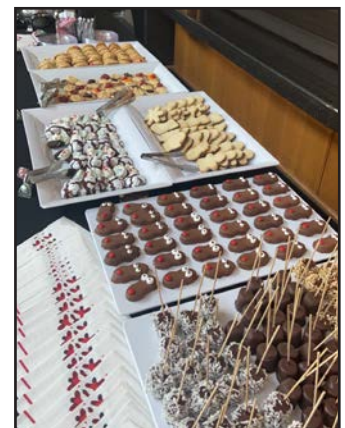


ADeidra Simmons (left) and Joe Dougherty

Holiday Cheer



ECU employees enjoyed a holiday mixer on Dec. 9. At left, employees show off their "ugly" shirt designs, while above, employees gather for holiday pastries, at right.





EYES ON CAMPUS!



Tacos were served on Taco Tuesday, Jan. 11, to welcome students back to campus for the spring semester.



ECU students Savannah Porter, left, and Emily Ford represent the ECU Spanish Club at a student organization fair held Jan. 20 at ECU's Stanley Wagner Ballroom. Several student organizations were on hand to share information with other ECU students.



Shundiin Bohan and Madeline Fairley represent ECU as they share highlights with a group tour from Strother High School.



ECU Bands performed Dec. 1. Above, the Wind Ensemble performs under the direction of Director of Bands Nick Meyers. Below left, Dalaan Bassett performs a solo. Below right, percussionists Abraham Jett and Liam Neel focus intently on the director.



The deadline for scholarships looms. If a student [applies](#) by Feb. 1, they will be considered for a University scholarship. To apply for ECU Foundation scholarships, visit: ecok.edu/scholarships





TIGER TOUGH!

ECU Tiger student-athletes prepare to take spring sports by storm. Basketball teams are in full swing with softball, baseball and cross country starting up. To follow the teams, stay connected with www.ecutigers.com, the official ECU Athletics website! Now about these photos ...

Top left: Brennan Burns, a redshirt freshman from Bethany takes the ball to the hoop in a double-overtime win against the Southeastern Savage Storm.

Top right: Izzy Cummins, a redshirt sophomore from Elgin takes the ball down the court.

Above left: Tuttle and Frontier high school girls basketball teams battle it out at the Bertha Teague Mid-America Classic. ECU hosted the event. (Photo by Richard Barron)

Above right: Sophomore Jett Allen will be wearing #21 this season. He's an infielder from Marion Junction, Alabama.

Right: Sophomore Madison Postier from Enid is shown in action, preparing for the upcoming season.



East Central University Commencement
December 11, 2021
Kerr Activities Center, Ada, Oklahoma

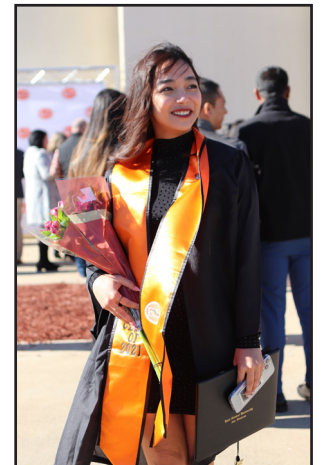


Graduates took the walk on Dec. 11

ECU's 2021 Distinguished Alumnus Jeremy Humphers addressed graduates at the Fall Commencement Ceremony on Dec. 11 at Kerr Activities Center. Humphers is senior vice president and chief accounting officer for Devon Energy. He graduated with honors from ECU in 1996, earning his degree in Accounting.

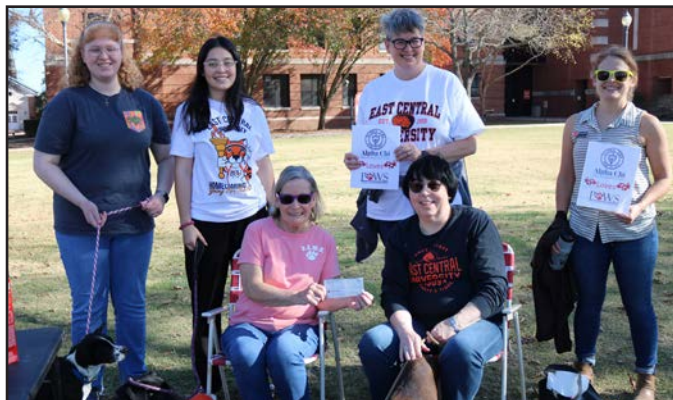


Distinguished Alumnus Jeremy Humphers



See more at www.ecok.edu/photo-galleries!





Alpha Chi brings PAWS to campus

Alpha Chi helped warm PAWS Dec. 2. PAWS – Pontotoc Animal Welfare Society – brought some furry friends to ECU campus for students to take a "paws" from studies for a service project. Alpha Chi received a Chapter Activity grant from the national chapter for the event. A total of \$420 was raised and some pet supplies were gathered to donate to PAWS.



LaNier (cont. from pg 1)

The man who wrote "all men are created equal" owned more than 600 slaves and fathered six children with one of them. While it's a complicated family history LaNier grew up with (confirmed by DNA in 1998), nothing has stopped his success.

He co-authored the book "Jefferson's Children: The Story of One American Family" along with photojournalist Jane Feldman. The book reads like a family album and follows LaNier on his journey across the country to meet relatives from both sides of the family: the Jeffersons and Hemings, those that have embraced their heritage and those that want nothing to do with the

third president of the United States.

Although LaNier has explored his heritage, he has been in the limelight his entire life. His first television job was as a teenager in Cincinnati, Ohio, on "Real Exchange," a talk show focusing on issues important to young people. He graduated from Kent State University and jumped headfirst into media in front of the camera at CBS2 Morning Show, then as a writer, director, editor, videographer and reporter at News 12 Networks.

LaNier is also an entrepreneur and owner of "365 Productions," the senior producer of "Black Enterprise Business Report" and Black Enterprise Magazine's "Entrepreneur of the Week" correspondent.

Air (cont. from pg 2)

Typically, the 40-hour version of the HAZWOPER certificate costs over \$500, Sewell said. That training is offered to ECU undergrads as part of their courses at no additional cost.

"This is worth thousands of dollars in training equipment for our students," Sewell said. "This allows our students to be certified before they graduate."

Sewell explained that as part of their training, the class will get into a hazmat suit while wearing a mask, the breathing apparatus and the bottle. The students then go through a circuit while performing tasks, like picking up dice or stepping over obstacles, tasks similar to experiences in the field.

All of this enhances the environmental health student experience thanks to the Ada



SCBA

Fire Department.

"These have a 15-year life," Johnson said, referring to the donated equipment, "but they are still functional."

Sewell said he would now be able to "dress out" at least half of classes for the training. With a smile, Johnson said the students should get a good idea of the limited visibility and cumbersome heavy equipment.

He is currently a television news anchor with BNC (Black News Channel). He has hosted and/or appeared on several television shows, including CW39's morning show in Houston, Texas, and "Arise Entertainment 360" that aired on Centric (BET's sister station), CNN – Newsroom, MSNBC with Katy Tur, The Today Show, CBS Sunday Morning, ABC's here & Now, Black Enterprise Business Report, Our World with Black Enterprise, and Survivor's Remorse.

LaNier is a family advocate. He regularly contributes to fatherly.com, and he is an editor at World Bride Magazine, and founder of #DaddyDuty365, a digital initiative celebrating positive and active fathers.

LaNier has also participated in the White House's "My Brothers' Keeper" initiative and the National Entrepreneurship Tour, The Slave Dwelling Project (sleeping overnight at Jefferson's home, Monticello), and works with Ancestry.com. He remains an active member of his church, the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., and the National Association of Black Journalists. He married his college sweetheart, Chandra. They live between New York City and Florida with their three children.

LaNier can be followed on all social media platforms @MrShannonLanier.

For more information on this event, please visit ecok.edu or call 580-559-5213.

