

**Eastern Kentucky University Retiree Association Meeting
December 21, 2016**

Location: The University Club at Arlington

Time: 11:30

Guest Speaker: President Michael Benson; Special Guest – Mrs. Debi Benson

Topic: Happenings at Eastern Kentucky University

Charles Hay, president of EKURA, opened the meeting by welcoming more than 70 members and guests to our December meeting. Guests were welcomed by a selection of seasonal music played on the piano by Edgar Gonsales, ECU Music Department.

Guests brought gifts of hats, mittens, and scarves to take to the Salvation Army which is a traditional community project. Canned goods were taken to local agencies as part of a continuing project. After a buffet luncheon, the meeting was called to order and Charles welcomed President Michael Benson to the podium at which time he presented the Bensons with a painting from EKURA. Following a few opening remarks, President Benson spoke to members and guests about all the exciting projects going on at ECU. He related a meaningful experience he had when a college student who was able to travel to Jerusalem with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir which had been invited to perform in the Church of the Nativity; he used a lovely analogy to “Circle of Life,” and referred to the purpose of life being undergirded by “being kind to each other.” As appropriate, he spoke of this season as one of thankfulness and referenced many who have been instrumental in bringing this university to its place in time.

Dr. Benson suggested how very critical to university growth to bring into laser focus the Strategic Plan. At the capital of the pillar which is the plan is Academic Distinction with emphasis on key terms such as “good,” “better,” “unique,” and “singular.” Setting ECU apart are programs such as aviation, lab school, golf, criminal justice; success in these areas differentiates us from other schools. Other levels in the pillar are:

2. Service to a region which has a shrinking population. We compete with surrounding states for students. The freshman class is 91% from Kentucky.

3. The holistic experience for students. What do we offer them in addition to academics?

4. Upgrades in infrastructure. Currently \$220M is being spent on projects--many of which are a result of public/private projects. Powell is being improved, both a recreation center and a baseball center are in the plans and Aramark is supporting food service plans.

5. All projects are managed with an unrelenting commitment to fiscal responsibility. The State holds up to performance in its audits; currently ECU is the fastest growing institution in the Commonwealth with its roots beginning in 1874. Thanking retirees as “soldiers” who have changed lives, President Benson opened the floor for questions. He says the dorms being built will be filled and that freshmen will be required to live on campus. ECU did not get a Work Force Development Grant with most going to community colleges as well as Northern Kentucky and Lindsey Wilson.

More may be available. The Central Kentucky Regional Airport will be located here. Model/College of Education Building is #1 in the state request for a capital project; the hope is that money will be available in the next funding cycle. The prestigious Mitchell Scholarship was awarded to Tyler Swafford which was quite a coop for a school the size of EKU.

After appreciation was expressed to the Bensons for supporting our organization, a raffle was conducted with many “gifts” sponsored by the Development office.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30. Our next meeting will be at Golden Corral with a presentation by the state demographer. More information will follow.

Respectfully submitted, Jackie Vance, Secretary