

Eastern Michigan University Regents to formally elect, introduce next president Dec. 10

Lilly Kujawski
Managing Editor

The Eastern Michigan University Board of Regents will hold a special meeting Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025 to formally elect and introduce the next president of EMU.

The special meeting will take place in Room 201, Welch Hall, at 12:30 p.m., said Board Chairman Nathan Ford at the Dec. 4, 2025, Board of Regents meeting. A reception for the campus community to meet the new president will occur after the special meeting, at 2 p.m. on the second floor of the Student Center, adjacent from the ballroom, Ford said.

The presidential search has been ongoing since current EMU President James Smith announced his intent in June 2024, to step down from his position when his contract expires on June 30, 2026. Smith has served as the EMU president since 2016.

“This marks the culmination of a very thoughtful, thorough and inclusive search process,” Ford said.

A 16-person Presidential Search Advisory Committee included campus and Ypsilanti



Members of the Eastern Michigan University Board of Regents meet on Dec. 4, 2025, in Welch Hall. Lilly Kujawski / The Eastern Echo

community stakeholders and was tasked with offering input and providing recommendations to the regents. The Presidential Search Committee, composed of the eight members of the EMU Board of Regents, makes the final decision in hiring a new president.

“Together, with the advisory committee and the many members of our campus community who participated in listening sessions and recruitment efforts, we have ensured that this search reflects the values, aspirations and future direction of Eastern Michigan University,” Ford said.

Through a course of listening sessions, the search advisory committee identified common qualities that stakeholders wanted in a president. With the help of WittKieffer, the executive search firm EMU hired to aid in the presidential search process, a leadership profile was created based on those common qualities.

“A lot of students, and everyone else, wanted to stay

true to Eastern’s mission, and really be a place that’s open and welcoming for all students, all types of people and all types of learners, because we have a very diverse learner population here,” said Student Body President Jack Booth, a student representative for the search advisory committee, to *The Eastern Echo* in a previous interview. “When talking to students, a lot of students were looking for communication and transparency.”

At last week’s Regents meeting, Ford encouraged the campus community to attend the special meeting and the reception to meet the next president.

“The depth and diversity of the candidate pool, and the strength of the finalists, reaffirmed the national reputation of EMU as an institution that attracts talented leaders ready to embrace our mission,” Ford said at the meeting. “We are confident that the individual we will introduce on Dec. 10 will inspire our students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners, and will build upon the legacy of President Smith while charting an ambitious course forward.”

EMU prepares for 2025 Winter Commencement

Gray Connor
Podcast Editor

Eastern Michigan University will be holding its Winter Commencement Ceremony on Dec. 14, 2025, at the George Gervin GameAbove Center. Graduates are to arrive at the location and check in no later than 8:30 a.m., with the ceremony itself beginning at 9:30 a.m.

For those who cannot attend the ceremony in person, a livestream will be available through the Commencement page on EMU’s website and on EMU’s YouTube channel. The livestream is set to begin and be viewable once the ceremony starts.

Each graduate is allotted six free guest tickets for the ceremony. No additional tickets or exceptions will be permitted. All attendees, excluding children under the age of two, will require a ticket for entry.

John Bodary, president and owner of Woods Construction and Interiors and former graduate of EMU’s construction management program, is set to speak at the ceremony. Since his graduation from the program in 1984, he has remained closely tied to the university, being awarded Alumni of the Year in 1995 and working as an EMU Foundation Trustee.

Alongside Bodary, Jim Webb, former chair of the

EMU Board of Regents, will be receiving recognition. Both Bodary and Webb will be awarded an honorary doctoral degree in Commercial Science, an honor awarded to recognize an individual’s contributions to society both on campus and outside of higher education.

What to expect

EMU graduates are not to bring any coats, purses, selfie sticks or other personal items onstage or into the arena for the ceremony. The ceremony itself is expected to last approximately two hours.

All attendees will be subject to metal detector screening once they enter the George Gervin GameAbove Center.

The following items are exceptions for those who intend to bring items inside:

- Attendees may bring a small clutch no larger than 4 inches by 6 inches; a clear plastic or vinyl bag no larger than 12 inches by 6 inches with one side completely clear of any logo or decoration; or one-gallon clear plastic freezer bags.
- Diaper bags, medically necessary items, child carriers and small camera bags are permitted. However, it is encouraged that these items be brought into the arena inside a clear see-through bag.
- For media and staff, additional bags holding equipment may be

permitted. However, these items will still be subjected to a metal detector screening prior to being let inside.

Free parking is available in both the George Gervin GameAbove Center and Rynearson Stadium lots, as well as east of the George Gervin GameAbove Center lot if the weather permits. With limited spots, guests are encouraged to arrive to the lot an hour before the ceremony.

All graduates who plan to attend the Commencement ceremony must wear regalia approved through EMU. As of late November, both undergraduate and graduate regalia can be purchased at Eastern Outfitters both online and in person. Located on the bottom floor of the Student Center, Eastern Outfitters is open to students from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday. For more information on purchasing and renting regalia, the due dates for each and additional rules for the ceremony, visit the Commencement ceremony website.

The George Gervin GameAbove Center is located at 799 N. Hewitt Road in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Those with additional questions can contact the Commencement Office at commencement@emich.edu.

EMU responds to enrollment decline

Lilly Kujawski
Managing Editor

As the state of Michigan continues to grapple with decreased enrollment in higher education, Eastern Michigan University is responding to the challenge with a strategic plan to address the decline.

For 2009-2010, EMU saw a total annual student enrollment of 28,067, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System reported. By 2023-2024, that number was down to 16,093

The total enrollment for the fall 2025 semester was 12,176 students, as of Nov. 20, 2025, said Katie Condon, vice president of enrollment management at the university. This fall, year-over-year freshmen enrollment decreased by 18.8% at EMU compared to last fall, dropping from 1,607 to 1,305 as of Nov. 20, 2025, Condon said.

Demographic quest

Addressing the enrollment decline first requires understanding why it is happening. There are a number of determinants behind decreasing enrollment, Condon said. Significantly, a declining birth rate in the United States is a driving factor, pulling down the number of expected high school graduates with it, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education reported. This is referred to as a demographic quest, Condon said, and may also be described

as a demographic cliff.

“One of the reasons we’re seeing a decline in enrollment is due to the declining population of high school graduates in the state of Michigan, so there’s less people to pursue higher education because of lower population in the state,” Condon said. “The population of the United States is decreasing overall, but you see some states — Florida, Texas and other places — that are seeing some population increases, so it’s not a broad-based stroke, but certainly in Michigan, the declines are pretty dramatic.”

Nationally, the number of high school graduates will see a peak this year, before a steady decline through 2041, as 2026 marks 18 years since the Great Recession, which contributed to the drop in birth rates, WICHE reported.

In Michigan, the year 2000 crude birth rate was 13.7 live births per population of 1,000; by 2023, the birth rate was 9.9, reported data from the state of Michigan and U.S. Census.

WICHE projected that Michigan will see a decrease of 20% in high school graduate populations by 2041 — the second biggest decline in the Midwest region.

Increased competition

EMU is also up against other higher education institutions in the state, Condon said. With state incentives like the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, which guarantees free community college tuition

to recent eligible high school graduates, more students may choose to attend a 2-year college out of high school.

EMU offers features and resources to attract transfer students of all kinds, including those coming from a two-year college, Condon said. For example, EMU offers more transfer articulation agreements than any other institution in Michigan, she said. The university has also added an additional admissions counselor specifically for transfer students and increased the transfer student scholarship it offers.

Flagship universities, such as the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, face their own enrollment challenges, including international student enrollment, Condon said. Because of this, these universities can admit more students, when historically they might have been more selective, she said.

Nationally, universities saw a decrease of 17% in new international student enrollment this fall, a report from the Institute of International Education said, with 57% of higher education institutions noticing a decrease. For universities like U-M and MSU, the out-of-state tuition that international students pay can be a significant source of revenue. Financially speaking, it could take two to three in-state students to make up for the lost tuition of one international student, Condon said.

SEE ENROLLMENT, PAGE 4

The Eastern Echo

The Eastern Echo serves the Eastern Michigan University and Ypsilanti communities as an independent student-operated newspaper. Founded in 1881 as *The Normal News*, *The Eastern Echo* distributes weekly print editions on campus and throughout the surrounding Ypsilanti community during the fall and winter academic semesters. *The Eastern Echo* also publishes online year-round. Published content is subject to copyright and may not be reproduced without prior written consent of the newspaper.

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THE ECHO MISSION

The Eastern Echo informs the Eastern Michigan University and Ypsilanti communities by highlighting newsworthy content in a fair, accurate and timely manner.

HOW TO REACH US

The Eastern Echo
Fall 2025 Editorial Board
Editor-in-Chief:
Natalie Kyle
editor@easternecho.com

Managing Editor:
Lilly Kujawski
managing@easternecho.com

News Editor:
Ameera Salman
news@easternecho.com

Sports Editor:
Caleb Henderson
sports@easternecho.com

Podcast Editor:
Gray Connor
podcast@easternecho.com

Arts Editor,
Cellar Roots Editor-in-Chief:
Madison Cantrell
cellarroots@easternecho.com

Graphics Editor:
Rylee Curley
design@easternecho.com

Photo Editor:
Max Taylor
photo@easternecho.com

Print Design Editor:
Jada Hauser
digital@easternecho.com

Copy Desk Chief:
Allie Beecher
copyeditor@easternecho.com

Marketing Director:
Gabriella Payeur
advertising@easternecho.com

Business Manager:
Quanzelle Wyatt
advertising@easternecho.com

Student Media Advisor:
Christine Uthoff
advisor@easternecho.com

CORRECTIONS

On page 2 of the Nov. 25, 2025, print edition of *The Eastern Echo*, the name of the John W. Porter Building was misstated.
In the Nov. 25, 2025, print edition of *The Eastern Echo*, EMU student Za'Riah Prather's name was misspelled.

Where to find the newest volume of *Cellar Roots*, EMU's Fine Arts and Literary Magazine:



CALENDAR

DEC 9 EMU Jazz Ensemble Concert
7:30-9 p.m.
Pease Auditorium

DEC 10 Warm Up Wednesday
All Day
Student Center — First Floor

DEC 11 Late Night Breakfast
8-10 p.m.
The Commons

DEC 12 Holiday Candlelight Concert
7:30-9:15 p.m.
Pease Auditorium

DEC 13 Honors College Fall 2025 Graduation
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Honors College

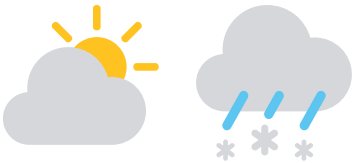
DEC 14 Winter Commencement
9:30-11:30 a.m.
George Gervin GameAbove Center

DEC 15 Tinker and Relaxation Kits
12-1:30 p.m.
Marshall Building — Room 201

WEATHER FORECAST

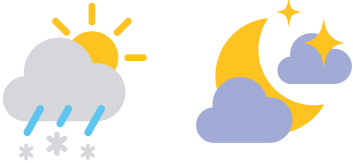
Tuesday, Dec. 9

High: 35 | Low: 30
Cloudy* / Rain and snow*



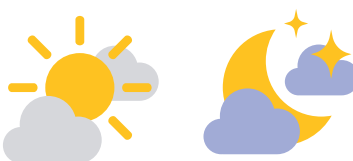
Wednesday, Dec. 10

High: 38 | Low: 21
Rain and snow* / Mostly cloudy



Thursday, Dec. 11

High: 30 | Low: 15
Mostly cloudy / Mostly cloudy*



Friday, Dec. 12

High: 26 | Low: 11
Mostly cloudy* / Mostly cloudy



Saturday, Dec. 13

High: 21 | Low: N/A
Mostly cloudy



*Chance of precipitation



Source:
The National Weather Service

Where to find The Eastern Echo:

- Off Campus:
- Ypsi Real Office, 106 W. Michigan Ave.
 - Book Love Bar, 110 W. Michigan Ave.
 - David's Books, 112 W. Michigan Ave.

- On Campus:
- Rackham Building
 - CAPS Building

Where to find our links:



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Politics, mutual aid and memes populate EMU's own social media app

Laura Meriweather
Staff Writer

Perri Pace, an Eastern Michigan University sophomore, uses the same social media platform every day. It isn't Instagram, though, or X, Snapchat or one of the other chart-topping services of the past two decades.

Pace uses the EMU EagleApp, the university's official social media platform.

Formerly known as EMU Engage, the EagleApp was developed by Ready Education, a Massachusetts-based software company that creates similar campus engagement applications for institutions across the country. On its website, the company lists Cornell University, Boston University School of Law and Johns Hopkins University among its clients.

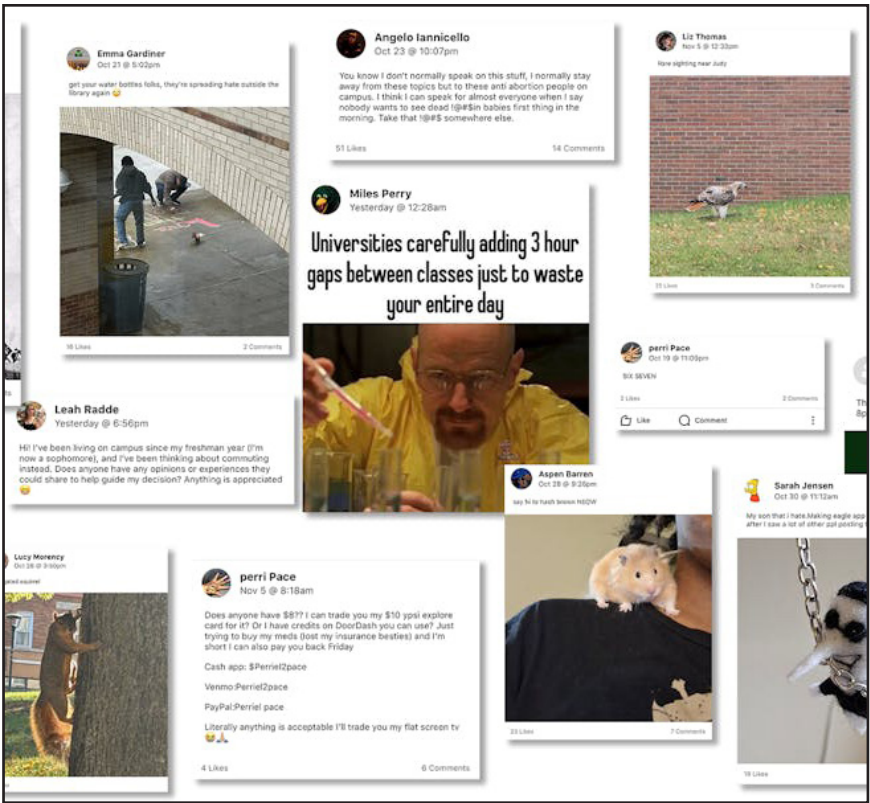
Eastern's app started development in 2018, data manager Tracey Sonntag said in a written statement. Sonntag is associate director for data at the Holman Success Center, which manages the EagleApp. Sonntag also serves as the EagleApp administrator.

As of Nov. 11, the EagleApp recorded 848 new downloads for the fall semester, Sonntag said, in a report provided by Melissa Thrasher in the university's communications office. Thrasher is the executive director of media relations for the university.

Sonntag also reported that the number of active users averages between 800 and 900 a day.

The EagleApp allows students to preview their current classes, discover upcoming events and get connected with various resources. The app also includes a social media feature that can be accessed by students and faculty alike. So far during the fall 2025 semester, users created 2,573 posts, 3,772 comments, 25,000 likes and 4,402 direct messages, Sonntag said.

The app's interface allows for posts to be made in a variety of channels, such as Lost & Found, Buy & Sell, Ride Sharing and a Student Feed channel that serves as a general forum



A collage of posts from the EMU EagleApp during the fall 2025 semester illustrates the ways students are using the campus-based social media platform. *Laura Meriweather / The Eastern Echo*

for discussion. The posts on the app vary widely, with students asking and answering questions about college life and logistics, promoting events, sharing jokes and memes and airing grievances about various topics. It is also used to share thoughts and opinions on politics and current events.

Dawn Reaume, an art major at Eastern Michigan, has mixed feelings about the app.

“I would call the EagleApp our campus’s Twitter,” Reaume said. “It is full of drama and full of politics and full of, honestly, a lot of hate. But then there’s some cool stuff. There’s sometimes cool people just posting stuff they see on campus.”

Pace echoed Reaume’s thoughts on the negative aspects of the platform’s culture.

“When it comes to the posts that are made regarding the political world, I think that people can be really, really defensive about standing where they

stand politically,” Pace said in an audio message. “It gets really aggressive, and I know these are not conversations that we’re having in person with these people whenever we decide to make a post about something like, for instance ... Trump or Kamala.”

“It does have a lot of problems, whether that be the lack of control towards harassment ... generally, it’s not a very strict platform,” Reaume said.

“The Campus Wall is community-moderated,” Sonntag said. “Any user is able to flag a post or comment for moderation review by the Holman Success Center. If a post or comment receives three or more flags, it is automatically hidden until either approved or deleted. We respect our students’ right to free speech and will only delete posts that violate the student code of conduct (threats, academic dishonesty or attempts to buy or sell illicit substances).”

Despite the tension around certain

topics, Reaume and Pace both said the app is a great way to keep students connected on campus.

“I’ve been on this app every single day,” Pace said. “It got to the point where even my professors in class were like, ‘Are you guys on this app? Perri is hilarious! Perri is trolling these people! Perri doing this, that and the third.’ So like, I am chronically on this app.”

Pace also spoke about her experience using the app to source mutual aid from the EMU community.

“The other day, I was short on my medication, and my insurance got cut. This is the second time my insurance got cut this year, earlier back in January and this time now, and people came through for me,” Pace said. “They sent me money, which I greatly appreciated ‘cause I was able to make that bill and get my medication that I needed. When it comes to community, I feel like that piece is strong.”

Reaume said the EagleApp also provides a unique opportunity for students running their own businesses.

“I’ve seen a lot of people actually get a good customer base through the app, which they wouldn’t have got otherwise,” Reaume said.

In response to a question about the possibility of future support for voice memos on the app, Sonntag said that while she is currently unaware of plans for that to happen, the university will be “piloting a fully revamped system in the winter term to have it ready for Fall 2026.”

“This new and improved platform will also help us manage all student organizations and on-campus event attendances,” Sonntag said.

Reaume said the app is also useful for meeting new people.

“It’s a really useful database for those who might not have a lot of friends on campus,” Reaume said. “I would encourage anybody to look into it, because I mean, you’ll know where the sidewalk chalk is, that’s for sure.”

The EMU EagleApp is available to download on the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

What's theMove? Dec. 9 - Dec. 15

Israel Shriki
Staff Writer

Looking for something interesting to do this week? Check out *The Eastern Echo's* list of upcoming events.

‘A Man for Christmas’ Musical — Friday to Sunday, Dec. 11-14

For the second week in a row and just before Christmas, the nonprofit organization Neighborhood Theatre Group will perform the musical “A Man for Christmas” in Ypsilanti. The show is an original production by NTG.

The parody tells the story of Kinzley, an ambitious writer and assistant. The single woman, who will turn 30 on Christmas Day, returns to her small hometown to attend two engagement celebrations, one for her sister and the other for her father. Will there be a third engagement for her and Eric Silverspoon? Can she succeed in winning Silverspoon’s love this Christmas? Theater show lovers and Christmas fans are invited to join in.

The play is directed by Kristin Anne Danko and A.M. Dean. The cast includes A.M. Dean, Cole Hunter Dzubak, Andrea Evans, Kylista Geiger, Lexxus Glaze, Michelle Marin, Josh Stewart, Drew Tallquist and Jen Whaley, accompanied by pianist Zac Fosler.

The show includes adult humor, and no intermission will be offered. On Nov. 26, the theater group released a trailer for the show on YouTube.

General admission is \$20, and student tickets are \$12. All tickets are nonrefundable.

Showtime is at 7:30 p.m., Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 11-13, and 2 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 14.

The Back Office Studio hosts the show at 13 North Washington St. Parking is free after 6 p.m. on the weekends.

Holiday Concert: Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra — Sunday, Dec. 14

The Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra, with the Depot Town Big Band as guest artists, presents the “Nutcracker Suite” on Sunday, Dec. 14, as part of its holiday fundraising auction.

The 2025-26 season marks the 27th anniversary of the Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra’s founding.

Music lovers and all community members are invited to attend the show. The performance will take place at Lincoln High School’s Performing Arts Center in Ypsilanti.

The concert begins at 3:30 p.m., and the fundraising auction runs from 2:30-4:15 p.m.

Tickets are available for purchase on the a2tix website or at the door and prices vary from \$7.96 to \$33.65.

Ypsilanti Historical Society Christmas Party — Sunday, Dec. 14,

The Ypsilanti Historical Society invites all to its Annual Christmas Party at the museum Sunday, Dec. 14.

The opening exhibition will be at 3 p.m. and will showcase the new “Rosie the Riveter Room,” a special exhibit by the Eastern Michigan University Historic Preservation Program. Family members of a Rosie who lived at the house will participate in the museum exhibition’s opening.

The event is from 2-5 p.m. Light fare will be on hand, and attendance is free.

December Informance — Sunday, Dec. 14

The Ypsilanti Youth Orchestra invites all to an informal community performance titled “December Informance” on Sunday, Dec. 14.

Attendees will be able to observe the process behind learning to play musical instruments and enjoy an exhibition of students’ work.

The show takes place at the Towsley Auditorium in the Washtenaw Community College Morris Lawrence Building from 4-6 p.m.

Attendance is free, and donations are welcome.

What Education Department changes mean for EMU

AnnaBelle Favre and Lilly Kujawski
News Reporter and Managing Editor

Last month, the United States Department of Education announced new partnerships with four agencies, the first step of the Trump administration’s plan to dismantle the department.

The president has set his sights on fully eliminating the department to give states more power over schooling. Only Congress has the power to truly abolish the department, but steps are being taken to disperse the responsibilities within it.

Functions of the Education Department

The Education Department was created in 1979 under the Carter administration and is responsible for establishing federal financial aid policies and dispersing funds. It is also responsible for enforcing equal access and discrimination laws, collecting data, and managing other federal-level administration.

The department does not, however, have control over curriculum or what is taught in schools, graduation requirements, or academic standards. Those are all under the control of the states.

Education programs will continue

Even if Congress were to eliminate the Education Department, the programs and laws that currently fall under it wouldn’t go away, said Gregory Plagens, a political science professor at Eastern Michigan University. Responsibility for administering those programs would have to move to other departments, he said.

Eliminating a department is very different from eliminating a program that currently falls under that department, Plagens said. For example, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was signed into

law in 1965, has language written into it that responsibility for administering the act falls under the Education Department. If the department were to be eliminated, that law would have to be revised to reassign responsibility to another entity, Plagens said.

New federal partnerships

The four new partnerships are between the Education Department and the departments of Labor, Interior, State, and Health and Human Services. Six new agency partnerships, as well as loan changes and other adjustments to education, will take effect July 1, 2026.

The partnership between the Education Department and the Labor Department will establish the Elementary and Secondary Education Partnership and the Postsecondary Education Partnership. The Labor Department will be responsible for overseeing federal K-12 programs and aligning them with future college and career goals, as well as administering college grant programs.

The Labor Department will also fully integrate postsecondary education programs into its department through the Postsecondary Education Partnership and will be responsible for the workforce development programs, at postsecondary education institutions.

The Education Department and the Department of the Interior will collaborate to establish the Indian Education Partnership, which deals with Native American education.

These programs include systems for Native American students to improve their education.

The Education Department and State Department are collaborating on the International Education and Foreign Language Studies Partnership. This will control all programs under the Fulbright-Hays grant, which supports overseas projects in foreign languages.

HHS will work with the Education Department to form the Foreign Medical Accreditation Partnership,

which deals with the accreditation of medical degrees. HHS will be responsible for evaluating the standards for medical schools in the U.S. and in other countries to ensure they are comparable.

HHS is also partnering with the Education Department for the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Partnership. This will aim to improve on-campus child care support for parents who are currently attending college.

Impact on EMU students

While federal student aid programs will be subject to change, they likely will not be eliminated. Given their nearly unanimous support, Pell Grants are unlikely to be affected. Congress will vote on funding federal college access initiatives, such as work study and public service loan forgiveness.

Proposed changes to the federal government’s definition of a “professional degree” has sparked backlash.

In 1965, a professional degree was defined in a federal law as one that “signifies both completion of the academic requirements for beginning practice in a given profession and a level of professional skill beyond that normally required for a bachelor’s degree.”

However, in recent discussions of Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill and student loan regulations, the professional degree loan cap was considered for only 10 degrees, based on those listed in the original definition. These include the following: Pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, chiropractic, law, medicine, optometry, osteopathic medicine, podiatry and theology.

The plan could significantly impact how much students are allowed to take out in loans, depending on their career path.

The bill would eliminate the current Grad PLUS loan program, which

allows students to borrow a maximum of the cost of attendance minus other financial aid. Without Grad PLUS, graduate students will face significant caps on their opportunities to take out loans. Those pursuing one of the ten professional degrees on the defined list will be able to borrow up to \$50,000 per year, and up to \$200,000 overall.

Students pursuing nursing, education, occupational therapy or other careers no longer on the list would have a loan cap at \$20,500 per year, and graduate programs will be limited to only \$100,000 overall.

Kim Lindquist, EMU’s interim director of nursing and director of nursing operations, explained the impact, especially within her field.

“This all comes at a time where we have a national nursing shortage, and one of the factors that is probably the most tied to the nursing shortage is the lack of nursing faculty,” Lindquist said. “You have to have faculty to educate students, but you can’t become a faculty member unless you have an advanced degree.”

She also said that the dismantling Education Department impacts grant approval and research contracts, and that the nursing program at EMU is already experiencing some of these issues.

“It’s frustrating to me,” Lindquist said. “I’m not a political person by nature, but when I can see very direct examples of research initiatives that have been interrupted, and we think about what’s behind this as an ‘interest in efficiency,’ and I think those two things are a fight against each other.”

University students could also see changes such as weakened civil rights protections, lack of accountability to universities, and more issues around loans and federal funding.

The full impact of these changes will not be felt for many months, but educators, administrators and students may see some effects sooner.



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EMU, other universities see impact of student visa, travel restrictions

Lilly Kujawski
Managing Editor

Eastern Michigan University saw enrollment of 32% fewer international freshmen students for the fall 2025 semester, on par with a nationwide decrease of overall international students in the United States.

This decrease comes after a travel ban on 19 countries earlier this year, a number that is expected to increase. It also follows reports of more than 6,000 student visas revoked this year by the U.S. Department of State, including at least two EMU students.

“International students have to get what’s called a U.S. visa in order to come to the United States, and what we saw over the last year under the current administration is that some visas have been revoked, and so that could be a scary thing for a student at a higher ed institution to think that they’re pursuing a degree, and then maybe that they’re no longer eligible to complete that degree,” said Katie Condon, vice president of enrollment management at EMU.

Nationally, universities and colleges saw a 17% decrease in new international student enrollment this fall, the Institute of International Education reported. 57% of higher education institutions across the country reported a decrease in new international student enrollment, the report said.

Last fall, EMU had 79 freshmen international students enroll; this fall, the number fell to 53, Condon said.

“We don’t enroll a large percentage of international students, but certainly, 30 to 40 less students makes an impact for Eastern,” Condon said. “We try to be as welcoming of an institution as possible for international students, but there, of course, is hesitancy from international students in pursuing a degree in the United States in general, and so we have to be responsive to that.”

There was a long lag time in which the federal government was not issuing new student visas, particularly in the late spring and early summer, so students were unable to get a visa appointment to be able to study in the U.S., Condon said.

“That created a little bit of a backlog, that students could be waiting a course of 90-plus days in order to even get an appointment to find out if they were eligible to receive that visa to come to the U.S.,” Condon said.

In June, the Department of State issued a statement that it would be vetting the social media accounts and online presence of visa applicants. Of the U.S. colleges and universities that reported decreased international student enrollment, 96% cited visa application concerns as a factor, and 68% pointed to travel restrictions, said the IIE report.

“We are hopeful that all of those things have been figured out and that it’ll be an easy process again for students to be able to study in the United States,” Condon said. “But we certainly want to be aware of the

rhetoric that is out there, but we know international students are an important component of the global diversity on our campus.”

This year, EMU saw an increase in international transfer students, which has a different meaning than it does for domestic transfer students, said Jeremiah Munce, interim director of the Office of International Students and Scholars. For international students, it means transferring ownership of one’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, or SEVIS, record from one institution to another, Munce said. That could mean transferring from an English as a Second Language school or from another college or university; usually, SEVIS transfers are already studying in the U.S., he said.

A new visa is not required for a SEVIS transfer student who is already studying in the U.S., Munce said. 17% of international students at EMU this semester were SEVIS transfer students, he said, based on data he provided in September 2025.

There are three categories of student visas: F-1 Student Visa, J-1 Exchange Visa and M-1 Student Visa. At EMU, most international students are on an F-1 visa, Munce said. Data from the university showed that 611 of the 632 international students at EMU this fall were studying on an F-1 visa. EMU sponsors the F-1 and J-1 visas that students use to come to the university to study, he said.

Read the full story at easternecho.com

Opinion

The WellNest Watch

When illness becomes a bill: Why medical debt is a public health crisis



Shafaat Ali Choyon
Contributor

Editor’s note: In WellNest Watch, master’s degree candidates in EMU’s College of Health of Human Services explore news, research and standard practices in the field of health and wellness.

Imagine needing urgent care and receiving a bill that derails your finances for years.

When getting better becomes a debt trap, medical care itself becomes a public health risk. A 2022 Kaiser Family Foundation study found that 41% of U.S. adults currently have medical or dental debt, which translates to roughly 100 million people when applied to the adult population.

That is nearly two in five adults. Many owe lenders, credit card companies, or collection agencies because of hospital bills they couldn’t afford to pay.

The same 2022 Kaiser Family Foundation study reported that about one in three adults, 35%, delayed or skipped needed medical care because of cost. Among adults with medical debt, the share was even higher, at 64% putting off treatment due to financial pressure.

This is not a fringe problem; it is an epidemic of avoidance. And like most epidemics, it hits hardest along existing fault lines. Black and Hispanic households, low-income families, women, and people without insurance are disproportionately burdened. Every unpaid bill becomes another barrier to future care.

Medical debt does more than damage credit scores; it damages health.

A 2024 study, published by the medical journal JAMA Network Open, found that counties with higher rates of medical debt reported more days of poor physical and mental health, along with higher mortality.

Chronic stress, anxiety and depression walk hand in hand with debt. Families skip medications or appointments to stay afloat. In many cases, being sick means choosing which illness to address: the physical one or the financial one. Even after people recover medically, the economic fallout lingers.

Medical debt blocks housing, reduces credit scores and traps families in instability. In public health terms, debt is not just a bill; it is a risk exposure.

Michigan confronted this reality directly. In July 2025, the state erased \$144 million in medical debt for about 210,000 residents through a partnership with the nonprofit Undue Medical Debt. Qualifying residents did not need to apply; the relief was automatic. In Kalamazoo County alone, more than 7,200 people saw \$2.4 million in debt wiped out in a single quarter.

In Ypsilanti, where students and families juggle tuition, rent and part-time jobs, an unexpected emergency-

room bill can cause real damage. Medical debt does not just shape physical health; it shapes graduation timelines, stress levels and housing stability. Michigan’s action recognizes something long ignored: Debt relief is a public health intervention.

Yet policies meant to protect patients remain unpredictable. In Jan. 2025, federal regulators proposed removing medical debt from credit reports nationwide, only for the rule to be struck down by a court six months later. Protections differ across states and hospitals vary widely in how they screen patients for financial assistance. When basic safeguards can appear and disappear overnight, families remain exposed.

International comparisons from the Commonwealth Fund’s Mirror, Mirror 2024 report and analysis from the Peterson–Kaiser Family Foundation Health System Tracker show the same pattern: The U.S. spends more on health care than any other high-income country, yet Americans live shorter lives and experience more preventable illness.

Part of this paradox lies in financial toxicity, where the cost of care becomes a disease in itself. Some reforms offer hope. Medicaid expansion reduces medical debt and strengthens financial stability.

The federal No Surprises Act limits unexpected out-of-network bills. State-level bans on medical debt credit reporting, such as in Colorado and New York, have dropped reported collections to zero. But these gains remain uneven and insurance designs continue to push people toward high deductibles and unpredictable billing.

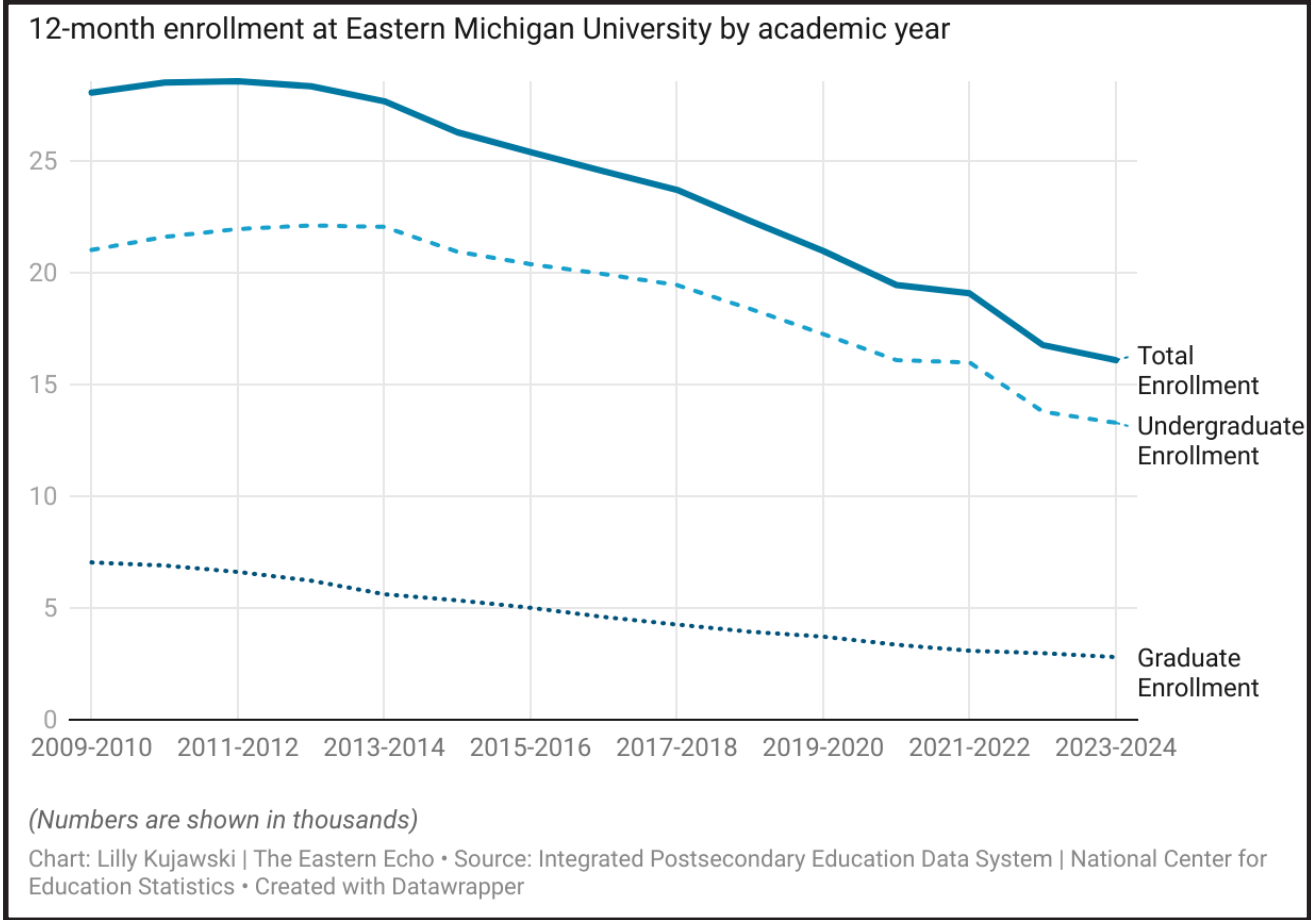
At its core, medical debt represents a failure of prevention: not of biology, but of system design. True prevention means protecting people from both illness and insolvency. Local hospitals can help by automatically screening patients for financial assistance before sending bills to collections. Universities like Eastern Michigan can strengthen support for students navigating insurance, billing confusion and rising healthcare costs. And policymakers should treat financial protection as part of public health infrastructure, as essential as vaccines, clean water or safe housing.

When illness becomes a bill, recovery is never complete. The debt does not stay on paper; it lives in bodies, minds and neighborhoods. Public health must reclaim its purpose: Preventing harm before it begins, even when that harm arrives in an envelope marked balance due.

Contributors to The WellNest Watch health column: Kegan Tulloch and Ebrima Jobarteh, graduate assistants in the Office of Health Promotions; and Shafaat Ali Choyon and Nathaniel King, graduate hall directors in the Department of Residential Life. All four are master’s degree candidates in the School of Public Health at Eastern Michigan University.

Enrollment

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Total enrollment at Eastern Michigan University has seen a decrease over time. Lilly Kujawski / The Eastern Echo

With increased acceptance rates expected at these universities, fewer students may opt for institutions like EMU, she said.

More students who were admitted to EMU ultimately chose to attend MSU than have previously, with 1,800 students taking that route last year, Condon said.

College-going rates

The rate in which people in Michigan seek and complete a degree is also a factor in higher education enrollment, Condon said. In 2019, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced a initiative called Sixty to 30 to increase the number of working-age adults in Michigan who have a college degree or certificate from 51.8% to 60%. Michigan is behind the national average of 54.9%.

The initiative includes funding support to help Michiganders pay for tuition, including the Michigan Reconnect program, which provides free community college tuition for Michigan residents 25 and older with no college degree.

In Ypsilanti, 45.8% of residents age 25 or older have a bachelor’s degree or higher during the the 2019-2023 period, behind the overall county rate of 58.1%, reported Health For All Washtenaw.

Rising to the decline

In October, EMU’s 5-year inaugural strategic enrollment management plan was approved, with steps and goals for the university to focus on through 2026-2031, Condon said.

“We did over 150 listening sessions with folks across campus, including faculty, staff and a number of student groups in order to create this plan,” Condon said. “The plan has six goals and a variety of different strategies to help reach those goals.”

Overall, the focus of the plan is to stabilize enrollment, Condon said. Currently, the university is working to create a website for the strategic plan, which the campus community will have access to, she said.

“It’s a multifaceted plan that is both about increasing the access for students, as well as increasing pathways for students to find an educational pathway at Eastern,” Condon said.

This means looking at the traditional freshmen cohort and strengthening EMU’s position as an institution where students want to pursue a traditional four-year education, Condon said. It also means increasing retention rates at EMU, so the university not only attracts new students but also keeps them.

“Being successful in college is a

very important factor in making sure that students can go on and get the careers that they want to,” she said. “I always say that the most expensive college degree that a student will pursue is the one that they don’t graduate with — when you take out a loan, but then you don’t have the degree at the end, and so we have to make sure that as many students as possible are able to complete their degree.”

The university has graduation rate goals for its student body and is working to make sure it offers the wrap-around services students need in order to graduate, Condon said. Another goal for EMU is to increase the experiential learning opportunities available, so students have the chance to learn in and outside of the classroom, creating more competitive candidates in the job market post-graduation, she said.

Next is a goal that Condon described as student attachment, which is meant to bring a sense of belonging and instill students’ pride in EMU. The hope is for that sense of school pride to result in students encouraging others, such as friends and coworkers, to pursue a degree at Eastern as well.

Read the full story at easternecho.com



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No Habhab, no problem: EMU men's basketball decimates Cleary University at home, 86-48

Jeffrey Ellingsworth
Sports Reporter

With the Eagles’ leading scorer Mo Habhab in street clothes, the Eastern Michigan University men’s basketball team was forced to look elsewhere for offensive production.

That production came in the form of Godslove Nwabude, the sophomore from Nigeria who dominated both ends of the court just as he has done all season long — leading the home team to an 86-48 win on Dec. 5 over Cleary University.

First half

With Habhab and Jon Sanders II out due to injury, it pushed Mak Manciell and Mehki Ellison into the starting lineup alongside Addison Patterson, Nwabude and Carlos Hart.

A clear size advantage for the Eagles allowed them to attack the paint almost immediately with Nwabude scoring a quick eight points.

Aggressive defense quickly turned into fouls for the Cougars as they put the Eagles on the charity stripe 15 times in the first half. However, the Eagles struggled at the free throw line, going 8-of-15 during this early stretch.

Mekhi Ellison lofted a beautiful lob to a cutting Nwabude who threw down a monster slam dunk that got the fans on their feet. Nwabude was all over the court for the Eagles in the first half, scoring eight points and pulling down six rebounds. On the other end, he volleyball spiked three shots out of bounds during the first half, giving Eastern a chance to reset and adjust their defense.

Addison Patterson led all scorers with 11 first half points, soaring in for multiple offensive rebounds and



Eastern Michigan University men's basketball player, Godslove Nwabude, dunking the ball in the game against Cleary University on Dec 5, at George Gervin GameAbove Center. Braden Copeland / The Eastern Echo

putback opportunities. The effort by him and his team gave the Eagles a 21-point lead and plenty of momentum.

With Eastern dominating on both sides of the court, they quickly jumped out to a double digit lead that they maintained throughout the half. The team headed to the locker rooms with a 44-23 lead over the Cougars, looking to double it in the second half.

Second half

Coming back from halftime, Patterson and Nwabude continued to put on the show that they had started in the first half. Nwabude had another lob dunk from Ellison eerily similar to the one he had in the first half, while Patterson hammered home a breakaway dunk after another Ellison steal.

While the first half was back to the basics turning effort into offense, it was just the opposite in the second.

Turnovers and mistakes allowed the Cougars to gain some easy buckets, forcing EMU head coach Stan Heath to put the starters back into the game.

The starters did their job, getting the lead back to 35 before Heath chose to return them to their seats in favor of getting his less experienced guys some more playing time. Every player except one that stepped onto the floor for the Eastern Michigan Eagles scored at least one bucket during the game, ensuring a commanding Eastern victory.

The highlight of the second half was Mbaye N’Diaye throwing down a monster breakaway jam, getting the Eastern fans on their feet, with cheers echoing around the arena.

That dunk was the finisher, putting a cap on a 38-point victory that pushed the Eagles record to 6-4 and prepared them for MACtion in just two weeks’ time.

Stats and what’s next

Nwabude and Patterson led the way in scoring with 14 points and 13 points respectively. Nwabude pulled down nine rebounds and blocked five shots, a team high in just 20 minutes of gameplay. Ellison and Patterson led the team in assists with four each, and Hart led the team with three steals.

The Eagles defense stole the ball 12 times and forced 19 turnovers against the Cougars. The Eagles shot 49% from the floor while only allowing the visitors to shoot 35%, also out-rebounding the Cougars 49-32.

The men’s team will travel to Fort Wayne for a matchup with the Purdue-Fort Wayne Mastodons on Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 8 p.m. The game can be viewed on ESPN+ or listened to on the WEMU radio network.

Olivia Sipsock’s rise to prominence: from high school standout to face of Eastern Michigan soccer



EMU women's soccer player, Olivia Sipsock, dribbling the ball into the Eagles' offensive box against Ball State on Oct. 9. Braden Copeland / The Eastern Echo

Caleb Henderson
Sports Editor

Growing up in a household with a father who played college soccer, Olivia Sipsock’s future was set in stone from a young age.

“I always looked up to him, and my goal was to always end up at a D-I [soccer] program,” she said.

Sipsock’s tenure on the pitch got off to a blazing start.

At Medina High School in Medina, Ohio, she led her team to the state Final Four as a freshman, before being named a team captain as a sophomore. Sipsock followed that up by earning All-America, All-Central Region, All-Ohio First Team and Greater Cleveland Conference First Team honors along with being named the Medina County Gazette’s Most Valuable Player in her junior season.

In her senior year, she was the Ohio Division I Player of the Year and earned United Soccer Coaches All-America and All-Region honors, officially ranking as the No. 15 player in the state and ending her high school career with 136 points on 62 goals and

32 assists — marks that placed her third in school history.

While Sipsock went on numerous visits to college campuses throughout her recruitment, there was one thing in particular that sold her on the idea of continuing her career at Eastern Michigan University.

“The thing that led me towards Eastern was just the community and the girls on the team — I felt at home when I came here and met everyone,” she said.

First foray in Ypsilanti

Sipsock’s tenure at Eastern Michigan in the fall of 2023 didn’t start seamlessly. After not starting the opening six games, the true freshman conducted some introspection that ultimately changed the course of her career.

“In high school soccer, it was kind of like my spot was there; there was really no competition. But when you come to college, there’s competition in your spot, and I feel like that was something I had to adjust for,” she said.

Sipsock eventually earned the starting spot she was looking for — starting the final 13 games of the

campaign for the Eagles. The results on the pitch came almost instantly.

Five goals and 12 points followed for the Ohio native, securing her spot on the Mid-American Conference All-Freshman Team that year and setting the groundwork for one of the most decorated careers Eastern Michigan’s soccer program has ever seen.

Sipsock credits her early career hurdles for subsequently fueling her eventual rise to stardom.

“Work ethic is everything. Even if someone’s not in your spot, you need to treat it as there’s always competition behind you because it’ll make you work harder in the end,” she said.

Playing under Taylor Clarke

After posting a 1-12-6 record during the 2023 season and the retirement of longtime Eagles head coach Scott Hall, Eastern Michigan hired Taylor Clarke, who came over from NCAA Division III’s Carroll University.

“When he came in, our energy as a whole kind of shifted, and we were really excited about soccer, because I think we were kind of defeated after my freshman year,” Sipsock said.

Sipsock played the wing during her freshman year under Hall but transitioned back into her natural role as a striker once Clarke’s tenure began in 2024. An uptick in performance for the team quickly followed.

While Sipsock herself posted identical stats to her freshman campaign — five goals, two assists, and 12 points total — the program improved their winning percentage from .211 to .528 in Clarke’s first year at the helm, narrowly missing out on the postseason MAC tournament.

Sipsock cites another pivotal moment in her Eastern Michigan tenure being the program’s exit meetings at the conclusion of her sophomore year.

“The coaches told me what I needed to do, what I needed to work on to earn my spot on the team again,” she said.

“For the whole summer, I got my mindset right, I got my fitness up, I worked on my touches, and I really honed in on focusing on soccer as a whole and my mindset,” Sipsock added.

Eagle Sports Tips & Tales: Dec. 9 - 15

Ruby Brannon
Sports Reporter

Eastern Michigan University Athletics is heating up as the second week of December brings key nonconference basketball matchups and a gymnastics showdown. Here’s what fans need to know for their weekly roundup of Eagles in action.

Women’s basketball | Eagles take on Duquesne at home

The EMU women’s basketball team is set to host Duquesne University on Tuesday, Dec. 9, at the George Gervin GameAbove Center in Ypsilanti, Michigan, with tipoff scheduled for noon and live coverage on ESPN+.

The Eagles enter the week with strong momentum, riding a season-opening win against Robert Morris University and a 64-55 victory at the University of Detroit Mercy, where standout freshman guard Peyton Hill led the team with a career-high 21 points. She shot 70% from the field, marking her sixth double-digit scoring game of the season, making her the first EMU freshman since at least 2008-09 to score 10+ points in six of her first seven games. She currently leads all Mid-American Conference freshmen in scoring with an average of 13.7 points per game.

Veteran standout Sisi Eleko added 17 points and eight rebounds in the Detroit Mercy win, her seventh straight double-digit scoring outing, helping EMU maintain a positive record under head coach Sahar Nusseibeh. Looking ahead to Duquesne, the Eagles aim to build on their historical advantage, having narrowly defeated Duquesne 79-77 in their only previous meeting on Dec. 28, 2007.

Men’s basketball | Road test against Purdue Fort Wayne

The EMU men’s basketball squad hits the road Wednesday, Dec. 10, facing Purdue University Fort Wayne in Fort Wayne, Indiana, at 8 p.m. The game will be available to watch on ESPN+ or listen to on WEMU/Varsity Network.

The Eagles currently lead the all-time series against Purdue Fort Wayne, 3-2, and are looking to rebound after losing to them 99-76 at home last season. Eastern Michigan enters this game having won three of their last four contests, including a 73-55 win over the New Jersey Institute of Technology and an 86-48 victory over Cleary University.

Women’s gymnastics | Friday night Ann Arbor regional showdown

The EMU women’s gymnastics team has a competitive opportunity scheduled for Friday, Dec. 12. This event is set to take place at 7 p.m. at the Crisler Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Eagles take on the Wolverines, an opponent against whom EMU has faced three losses in recent history dating back to 2003. This December contest is anticipated to provide valuable competitive action for the Eagles athletes in a regional setting.

Other campus and athletics highlights

The action amongst EMU Athletics extends beyond the basketball court, with multiple programs receiving recognition in competition, recruitment and academics.

Specific highlights include the following:

- Sisi Eleko was named women’s basketball MAC Player of the Week for outings against Robert Morris and Detroit Mercy.
- Dontae McMillan was tabbed as football’s MAC Player of the Week for his performance against Western Michigan University.
- EMU football secured a record largest incoming class during the early signing period, officially adding 37 players to the program.



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EMU AMP! connects student artists with audiences at Handmade for the Holidays market



EMU student, Jade Traska, hosts a table full of crocheted goods for their small business, The Crafty Queer, at the Handmade For The Holidays event on the first floor of the Student Center on Wednesday, Dec. 3. Owen Cardenas / The Eastern Echo

Amplifying the Arts at EMU, or AMP!, hosted its annual holiday art market, Handmade for the Holidays, on Dec. 3.

For more than ten years, AMP! has created a space for student artists to connect with audiences, sell their work and for people to buy art as holiday gifts for their loved ones.

“It’s an opportunity for [student artists], free of cost, to sell their stuff, get their name out there, and connect with audiences,” said Kaylynn Haapala, president of AMP! “We’re doing really

good this year, we have more vendors than we’ve ever had.”

The market featured more than 15 student vendors. Learn about five of the vendors below.

Fashion Marketing Innovation Craft Club

Jenna Long and Neveah Ford sold handmade products for Fashion Marketing Innovation Craft Club.

The Craft Club is not an official club on campus, but a group within the FMI program. Ford sold custom

punch-needle coasters. Long sold crocheted pieces and they will have a variety of hats, many of them Five Nights at Freddy’s themed, along with handwarmers, tops and shorts.

“My main goal when creating is to combine whimsy and functionality and [I] see my pieces as the final accessory to an outfit,” Long said. “When making crocheted items, I normally take inspiration from my favorite pieces of media and create, envisioning my favorite characters/artists wearing my pieces.”

The Crafty Queer

Jade Traska, or The Crafty Queer, sold handmade crochet items. Their work consists of wearable items like cardigans, vests, tank tops, bandanas, hats and scarves, though they sold smaller items such as keychains and plushies.

“I am the type of person who always needs to be working on something with my hands so I crochet all day, every day,” Traska said. “I have been crocheting for a while, so most times, I will start with a pattern and then add my own spin on it to match with the vibe I am going for.”

Traska is inspired by the way their mom and grandmother taught them to crochet and wants to sell their art to help pay for college, as well as finding joy in the hobby and sharing that with others.

Crochet with Ty

Tyler Huddleston, of Crochet with Ty, sold crochet amigurumi items.

Amigurumi is a Japanese art form that uses crochet to create small stuffed toys.

Huddleston often finds herself looking at the creations of others to find inspiration. She loves to crochet and her main purpose with the craft is to share that joy with others.

briarfate

Lily Elliot, selling art as briarfate, was selling a variety of prints, as well as greeting cards and fabric patches.

“My work tends to appeal to an alternative audience, embracing the grit and imperfections that come along with most printmaking,” Elliot said. “The subject of much of my print work tends to reflect current internet culture through a feminist lens, often as a response to online conversation. I aim to repurpose hateful speech and ideas into designs that empower objectified groups and stir new conversations.”

She also offered a number of pieces with more lighthearted themes.

EMU National Art Education Association

Lauren Lakin, vice president of EMU NAEA operated a booth selling items made by herself and other members of NAEA.

Lakin’s products include ornaments, jewelry, key chains, crochet items and buttons. NAEA has themed craft nights where the organization comes together to create things.

“This work is meaningful to us in multiple ways,” Lakin said. “We have fun together and build community, and we are present and contribute to campus life and events to provide fun, enjoyment and exposure to the arts for all students.”

The organization’s proceeds are going toward funding an upcoming conference this spring, as well as future events.



EMU student, Logan Wilkowski, runs a vendor table of handmade goods. Owen Cardenas / The Eastern Echo



EMU students engage with Jenna Long and Neveah Ford’s vendor table. Owen Cardenas / The Eastern Echo



EMU student, Kaitlyn Eckermann, runs a vendor table for her small business, Kaitlyn Crochets. Owen Cardenas / The Eastern Echo

Opinion

Review: 'Wicked: For Good' releases with a quiet bang and action-packed, emotional story

Gray Connor
Podcast Editor

“Wicked: For Good” is the second act of Jon M. Chu’s movie adaptation of the bestselling Broadway musical, based on the novel by Gregory Maguire, further exploring the lives of and the relationship between Glinda Upland, played by Ariana Grande, and Elphaba Thropp, played by Cynthia Erivo.

Packed with emotional songs about love, loss and ambition, as well as thrilling sequences that showcase the world of Oz beyond the Yellow Brick Road, “For Good” mixes colorful set pieces and character designs with serious themes like discrimination and the cost of being deemed as different.

With the Wizard and Elphaba at odds due to Oz’s treatment of its animal citizens, Elphaba is forced into hiding, working behind the scenes to rally the people of Oz against the Wizard and his anti-animal policies. Glinda, recruited by the Wizard and his loyal assistant, Madame Morrible, is caught at the crossroads between staying loyal to her former friend and taking the opportunity to impress the Wizard and ensure her position in Oz.

Elphaba’s journey to becoming the Wicked Witch of the West humanizes the classic villain and narrates an Oz riddled with corruption, showing how discrimination and fear-mongering

can lead to good people being taken advantage of and scapegoated.

The next sections of this review contain spoilers. For those who do not want to read further, the overall rating is a 7 out of 10.

Highs

While new movies often rely on green screens and CGI to bring magic to the big screen, “Wicked: For Good” goes above and beyond with handcrafted and detailed set pieces.

Another high is the impressive acting across the cast, with standout performances by Erivo as Elphaba and Ethan Slater as Boq. For instance, in a scene where Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion and the Tin Man walk through the Emerald City, encouraged by onlookers to “kill the Wicked Witch,” Slater as the Tin Man balances the character’s heartless nature with pure rage, leaving audiences with an eeriness that can be felt through the screen.

Another scene shows Elphaba, surrounded by her rescued flying monkeys, walking along the top of her castle singing “No Good Deed,” an emotional ballad in which she attempts to save the life of her love interest, Fiyero Tigelaar, played by Jonathan Bailey. While part one’s “Defying Gravity” will likely go down as the series’ most impressive song, Erivo’s

rendition and sheer emotion in “No Good Deed” make it the closest thing in comparison.

While part one introduces the relationship between Elphaba and Glinda as complex and mean-spirited, part two is sincere in its depth, allowing for the two characters to come together as friends emotionally and naturally. Throughout “For Good,” many of the songs from part one are reintroduced to parallel the character’s circumstances, like Glinda reprising Elphaba’s “I’m Not That Girl.”

Another standout from the musical numbers is “For Good,” in which Elphaba and Glinda sing to one another for the final time. This moment mirrors a similar scene from the finale of part one in which the characters are forced to accept that they will be separated. In the context of part two, this scene serves as an emotional send-off.

The movie ends on a satisfying note with a callback to the original stage play — a scene that feels impactful whether or not audiences catch the reference. In the end, the movie reasserts the importance of love, acceptance and how our relationships can change us.

Lows

While the movie thrives in its intricate and detailed set design mimicking the colorful magic of the original 1939 film, it lacks the

emotional weight showcased in part one. This is partially because of the song selection.

While the front half of “Wicked” is made up of power ballads and tracks that had already made their way into the musical mainstream, such as “Defying Gravity” and “Popular,” part two does not have the same big hits. Some songs, such as “No Good Deed,” give audiences a glimpse back into the feeling the first part had but still fell flat overall in comparison.

Similarly, while part one had the freedom to explore the world of Oz before Dorothy’s arrival, part two of “Wicked” felt constrained in its attempt to hit the story beats required to accurately unfold the events of the “Wizard of Oz,” for which part one laid the foundation.

One scene near the beginning of the movie shows Boq, a Munchkin infatuated with Glinda and in a relationship with Elphaba’s sister, Nessa, attempting to escape Munchkinland after Nessa’s term as governor turns tyrannical. In this scene, the audience is shown how the Tin Man came to be. While the scene makes sense in the context of “The Wizard of Oz,” Nessa’s shift in personality from kind and ambitious to controlling and evil feels sudden and underdeveloped. Similarly, Boq’s own transformation into the Tin Man, while downright horrifying, also feels rushed.

Another issue in the film is pacing. Throughout the movie, the audience is shown flashbacks of the main cast hanging out together in a field, insinuating that, beyond what the two movies have showcased, the five lead characters shared a close bond. While the scene was perhaps intended to emphasize the emotional weight of these characters at odds with one another, the attempt lacks the necessary buildup for audiences to feel upset.

Finally, while “Wicked: For Good” explores its themes of corruption, discrimination and oppression with a comedic tone, this reliance on keeping scenes light and laughable takes away from some of the impact these messages may have. One example is a scene where Elphaba and Glinda confront one another in front of Dorothy’s house after the tornado. While funny, some of the themes feel lost.

Verdict

Despite falling short of part one in a handful of places, “Wicked: For Good” offers fans of the story a well-crafted and emotional finale.

Part two takes a unique and loyal approach to reimagining the world of Oz, satisfying both hardcore fans and casual viewers alike. Although a few scenes feel rushed and out of place, the movie overall sticks the landing.

Rating: 7 out of 10



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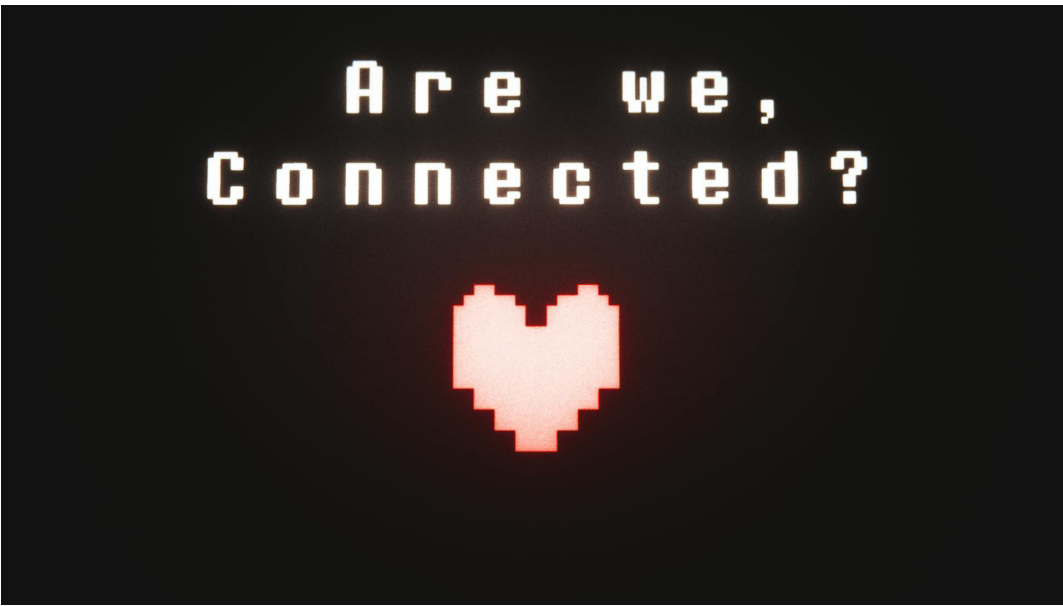
Connection_Lost | Yiri



Trucks | FunkyL0af



Connection | Yiri



2026 | Yiri



Bird 2 | FunkyL0af



WORD SEARCH

Can you find all the Winter words?

A	B	D	B	O	C	O	D	C	B	K	S	H	K
D	F	G	S	R	S	T	N	E	S	E	R	P	L
C	A	S	H	N	W	H	U	P	D	B	K	L	R
H	P	Y	O	A	O	P	L	H	I	C	N	N	Y
A	B	L	V	M	S	W	R	T	Y	U	N	O	B
J	S	Y	E	E	H	K	F	I	B	S	E	I	C
E	Y	R	L	N	O	X	A	L	I	G	H	T	S
P	L	R	E	T	D	Y	M	C	A	L	G	C	Z
C	L	C	O	Q	N	Z	I	W	E	K	Q	E	U
P	O	O	W	Q	V	H	L	Q	H	U	E	N	P
F	H	O	S	N	E	W	Y	E	A	R	V	N	Y
X	V	T	K	F	G	H	J	K	M	A	S	O	T
D	Y	X	R	I	X	F	G	S	A	Q	E	C	Q
J	P	H	T	Z	E	Y	R	O	T	O	G	I	E

- Snowflake
- Ham
- Holly
- Shovel
- Ornament
- Ham
- Presents
- Lights
- Connection
- Family
- New Year
- Cookie

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Holiday souvenirs, hot cocoa reindeer and basketball cheers at EMU



Knitted hats, scarves and other assorted items were handed out at the Warm Up Wednesdays Booth in the Eastern Michigan University Student Center on Dec. 3. *Kaleb Stanley / Eastern Echo*



Lucy Morency and Emily Eby browse items on the table at the Warm Up Wednesdays Booth in the Eastern Michigan University Student Center on Dec. 3. *Kaleb Stanley / Eastern Echo*



The Brehm Center Symposium 2025 honored students of The Delores S. Brehm Endowed Scholarship in Special Education on Thursday, Dec. 4 in Room 310 of the EMU Student Center. *Bea Dingman / Eastern Echo*



A student creates a hot cocoa reindeer during the Honors College Holiday Swoopla in the Honors College Reception Hall on Saturday, Nov. 6. *Lee Hammock / Eastern Echo*



Ann Eisenberg, dean of the EMU Honors College, shows off her hand-crafted hot cocoa reindeer at the Honors College Holiday Swoopla in the Honors College Reception Hall on Saturday, Nov. 6. *Lee Hammock / Eastern Echo*



Eastern Michigan University men's basketball player #33 John Shanu II, dribbles the ball around a Cleary University player in their game on Dec. 5 in the George Gervin GameAbove Center. *Bradán Copeland / Eastern Echo*



Eastern Michigan University women's basketball player, #23 Peyton Hill, in the process of completing a layup in the game against Defiance at George Gervin GameAbove Center on Dec. 5. *Bradán Copeland / Eastern Echo*

The Eastern Echo

2025

Year in Review



Here's a throwback to some
of our top headlines!

- “EMU students launch petition drive demanding restoration of campus food markets”
- “EMU regents approve parking system repurchase, litigation settlement plan”
- “The MACcoon chain: how a YouTube comment birthed Eastern Michigan football’s newest tradition”
- “EMU men's basketball coach Stan Heath scores 250th career win”
- “SNAP benefits pause amid federal government shutdown, Michigan food pantries offer hope”
- “Ypsilanti City Council passes resolution opposing UM, Los Alamos data center”
- “Protesters march for Ypsilanti's first No Kings demonstration”
- “One Big Beautiful Bill' changes student borrowing and loan limits”

Multimedia Staff Pics

Across platforms, from multimedia journalism to print publication, Eastern Echo staff members chose their favorite work from 2025.

Photography



“EMU Homecoming win vs Louisiana Lafayette, 2025” by Julius Stewart



“Trey Reed Vigil” by Owen Cardenas



“Rock the Patio 2025” by Max Taylor



“Ann Arbor Pride” by Lee Hammock



“Queer Talks 2025” by Kaleb Stanley



“EMU Homecoming win vs Louisiana Lafayette, 2025” by Bradan Copeland



Comics

Dust | Yiri



Opposite of a gain | Julia Bartlett



WONDERCORD x Gideon the Ghost (pt. 5) | Rylee Curley



Roots & Cellar Roots



The year 2025 brought to fruition the 51st volume of *Cellar Roots*, EMU's student-operated fine arts and literary magazine. A huge shoutout to the staff that made this volume possible: Editor-in-Chief Madison Cantrell, Graphic Design Lead Laurence Bourdeau and Graphic Designer Ashley Schemer! In Sept. 2025, *Cellar Roots* also introduced a new Ypsilanti area arts and entertainment publication, *Roots*, in conjunction with *The Eastern Echo*. *Roots* will continue to highlight local artists monthly in the new year.

December Graduates

As graduating Eastern Michigan students prepare for commencement, The Echo and Cellar Roots are celebrating some of our own staff members as they wrap up their time at EMU. Congratulations to our Echo & Cellar Roots graduates and the entire class of 2025!



Ameera Salman
news editor, editor-in-chief, Cellar Roots editor-in-chief



Madison Cantrell
Cellar Roots editor-in-chief, arts editor, photo editor, lead photographer, news reporter



Riley Cantrell
Social media designer



Jack Monk
Sports reporter



Caleb Henderson
Sports editor, sports reporter



The Eastern Echo's 2025 Year in Review is continued on our website, easternecho.com. Scan the QR code to see our writers' favorite work from this year, staff media favorites and more.