

Meal plan rates
to increase

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EMU alumna Jasmine Jones to compete in Winter 2026 Olympics



Jasmine Jones, EMU track star and 2018 alum, will be racing in the Olympic two-woman bobsled race in Cortina, Italy, on February 20 and 21.
(Courtesy of Jasmine Jones)

AnnaBelle Favre
News Reporter

Most people only dream of competing for gold and staying in the Olympic Village, but for Eastern Michigan University alumna Jasmine Jones, it feels a lot like coming home.

“It’s really like being back at Eastern. The Village feels like a campus ... we have lots of time to talk to other teams in the dining hall or when I’m doing laundry. We have a resource center, snacks and nutritionists,” Jones said. 2018 EMU graduate Jones is set to compete as a pusher in the Olympic

two-women bobsleigh race. On Feb. 20 and 21, she will race in Cortina, Italy, for this year’s Olympic Games. Before being introduced to the sport of bobsledding, Jones was a star athlete on the EMU track and field team as a sprinter. She took home several Mid-American Conference first place titles, was named a First Team All-American for her performance at the NCAA Championships, and still holds the record at EMU for the women’s indoor 200-meter dash. Over a phone call from the Olympic Village, Jones told *The Eastern Echo* that she had never considered bobsled as a sport, but after her strength coach nominated her for an All-American Award, she had caught the eye of Elana Meyers Taylor, an Olympic bobsledder and, with five medals, the most decorated Black Winter Olympian to date. Taylor encouraged Jones to try out for the Olympic bobsled team, saying her stats were conducive to a good pusher. Jones took the opportunity, went to rookie camp, and placed third, securing a spot in the 2026 Winter Olympics. Jones explained how highly competitive it is to land a spot on the women's bobsled team. “In women’s (bobsled), you’re always fighting for a spot, because there’s only three sleds, and only three women can race. It’s so competitive,” Jones said. Jones competed in her first bobsled race in 2019 and has since performed in three World Championships. She has earned one gold, one silver and three bronze World Cup medals. This will be Jones’ first Olympics, and the reality is still setting in. “It’s finally feeling real. Having officially met with being an Olympian

when I got here shows that I finally met this goal; I’m really here ... I am meeting my biggest goals and enjoying every moment,” she said. Weeks before racing was set to begin, Jones settled into the Cortina Olympic Village with the rest of the sliding sport athletes before the opening ceremony Feb. 6. “In a few hours, we will all put on our Ralph Lauren Opening Ceremonies kit and head out. It’s kind of like a parade — we all walk down the street and then watch the cauldron get lit,” Jones said. She and the rest of the sliding sport athletes attended a smaller opening ceremony in Cortina, while the larger performance happened in Milan. In the weeks between attending the opening ceremony and race day, Jones and the rest of Team USA’s bobsled teams will train, work on recovery and sports medicine, and use the resources available to them at the village to prepare for the big moment. The Olympic Village offers athletes large gyms and training facilities, dining halls and medical clinics with some of the world’s best physical therapists, chiropractors and massage therapists. Athletes can also enjoy amenities such as hair, nail, and beauty salons; entertainment zones; multi-faith centers; wellness programs; and free technology. Although athletes room with their teammates, they can use these spaces to meet people from all over the world. “We all watch TV together and just hang out. I’m also really into the pins, so I’ve been trading like crazy,” Jones said. Olympians often partake in the tradition of trading pins during their stay in the Olympic Village. This unofficial event started in 1896 in the

Athens Games. Participants, athletes and fans swap thousands of pins that are commemorative, show mascots or are sponsored. There are many dedicated trading centers in both Milan and Cortina. Jones also told *The Echo* that some of her competitors are familiar faces, because she often races these same athletes during the World Cup season. “It’s cool seeing them in a different element. It’s the same people, just a few more cameras and different outfits,” she said. Jones compared the Olympics to college indoor national competitions. “It’s the same feeling, just a bigger stage,” she said. Although the sports she has competed in are wildly different, Jones explained that the principles are the same. “EMU definitely taught me the qualities that I need to be a good athlete: to be resilient and keep giving everything I have,” Jones said. Jones is also a part of the United States Air Force World Class Athletes Program and is a senior airman in the Air Force. This program allows top athletes to train full-time for the Olympic Team while maintaining a military career in the Air Force. Jones has been enlisted to the Air Force and has a contract agreement to train and perform in the Olympics. After she has retired from the sport, she will return back to the service in Supply Material Management. For those interested in watching Jones and the rest of Team USA’s bobsled team, tune in to NBC or Peacock Feb. 15-21. Jones will be competing in the two-woman race Feb. 20 and 21.

'Teed it up perfectly': EMU prepares for presidential transition

Lilly Kujawski
Managing Editor - News

Eastern Michigan University’s president-elect Brendan Kelly, an EMU alum, has a message for students: someday, they, too, might lead the university. “You are going to end up running this university,” Kelly said during a December 2025 press conference. “I know that because I was a student here, and now I’m going to end up running this university.” Kelly, 50, earned two degrees from EMU. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in public relations in 1998 and completed a master’s in communication in 2000. He was named president-elect by the EMU Board of Regents in December 2025 and is working with current EMU President James Smith through a transitional period before he takes his post in April. Most recently, Kelly served as president of the Arkansas State University System. Previously, he served as president of the University of West Georgia, interim president of the University of South Carolina in 2019 and chancellor of the University of South Carolina Upstate from 2017-20. Before that, Kelly worked at

the University of West Florida, beginning as a professor in the school of communication arts, and later working as vice president of university advancement. Earlier in his career, he worked at EMU as assistant director of forensics and lecturer in the Department of Communication and Theatre Arts. “He comes with perfect pedigree; he is experienced as a university president,” Smith said of Kelly to *The Eastern Echo*. “I think we have teed it up perfectly.” **Contract and transition** Kelly’s presidential salary was set at \$520,000, showed an amendment to his contract. Currently, Smith’s salary is \$512,107, said Melissa Thrasher, executive director of media relations at EMU. The EMU presidential salary is on par with other public universities in the Mid-American Conference, such as Western Michigan University, which reported a presidential salary of \$525,000 in 2025, Central Michigan University, which reported \$500,000, Ohio University, which reported \$612,000 in 2024, and Northern Illinois University, which reported \$515,000.00 in 2025. Kelly will assume a salaried employment consultant position at EMU from March 1 to March 31,

before taking on his role as president April 1. “Throughout the Term, the Executive shall devote Executive’s full professional time and attention to the business and affairs of the University and shall not engage in any other business activities, whether or not such business activity is pursued for gain, profit, or other pecuniary advantage, without the prior written consent of the Chair of the Board,” stipulated Kelly’s contract. On May 3, Smith’s presidential term will end and he will move into a faculty role, his contract said. He will spend some time in the summer aiding special projects and the transition, before going on administrative leave beginning July 1, 2026. He will rejoin EMU as a faculty member in the fall 2027 semester. His faculty salary will be calculated at that time, and will be 10% higher than the highest paid full professor of his department, per the contract. EMU will pay up to \$30,000 in moving expenses, including parking, incurred by Smith as he moves out of University House. **Choosing EMU** Kelly described his upcoming



Eastern Michigan University alum, Brendan Kelly, is the new president-elect. Announced at the Board of Regents meeting on Dec. 10, 2025 in Welch Hall. Bradan Copeland / The Eastern Echo

position as EMU president as a homecoming, one that would bring him and his wife, Tressa Kelly, an EMU alumna, back to the campus where they met. Kelly began serving as ASU president in September 2024. He said leaving ASU prematurely wasn’t his plan. “I never, ever, ever, ever, ever anticipated leaving my current post in such a brief time. Never in a million years,” he said. “When I applied for this job, I made it really clear: I am not applying for any jobs right now. I am applying for this job. This institution is unlike any in the country for us.”

Kelly gave the ASU System Board of Trustees notice of his departure, ASU Board Chairperson Steve Eddington said in a statement. “We appreciate Dr. Kelly’s service and respect his decision to return to his alma mater and home state,” Eddington said in the statement. “The Board of Trustees will outline a plan to prepare for a smooth transition for future leadership. We have a strong team of campus and system leaders to carry on the work of service to our students in the interim.” **SEE PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION, PAGE 3**

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.

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Winter 2026
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CORRECTIONS

At *The Eastern Echo*, we correct our mistakes. If we got it wrong, we want to make it right. Errors should be brought to the attention of the editor-in-chief by email: editor@easternecho.com.

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



CALENDAR

FEB
17

Eagle-Con

7-10 p.m.
Sudent Center Ballroom

FEB
18

JoyFest

4-7 p.m.
Porter College of Education — Room 100

FEB
19

Soul Food & Open Word Night

6-8 p.m.
McKenny Hall — Room 300

FEB
20

Wind Symphony Concert: Ecstatic Water

7:30-9 p.m.
Pease Autitorium

FEB
21

"Proof" by David Auburn

2-4 p.m., 7-9 p.m.
Judy Sturgis Hill — Sponberg Theatre

FEB
22

Campus and Symphonic Band Concert

3-4:30 p.m.
Pease Auditorium

FEB
23

Indoor Flag Football Championship Night

9-11 p.m.
Indoor Practice Facility Fields 1 and 2

WEATHER FORECAST

Tuesday, Feb. 17

High: 44 | Low: 37
Mostly cloudy / Rainy*



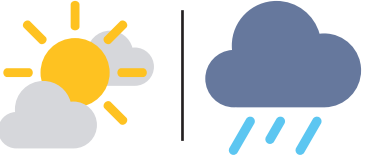
Wednesday, Feb. 18

High: 60 | Low: 35
Rainy* / Partly cloudy



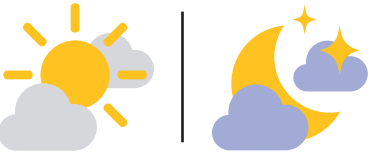
Thursday, Feb. 19

High: 53 | Low: 37
Partly sunny / Rain likely



Friday, Feb. 20

High: 48 | Low: 28
Partly sunny* / Partly cloudy*



Saturday, Feb. 21

High: 39 | Low: N/A
Partly sunny / N/A



*Chance of precipitation



Source:
The National Weather Service

Where to find
The Echo:

Off Campus:

- Northern Grind, 317 W. Cross St.
- Peninsular Place, 1000 N. Huron River Drive
- Sweetwaters Coffee & Tea, 735 W. Cross St.

On Campus:

- Rackham Hall
- Rec/IM
- Sill Hall

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EMU meal plan rates to increase in fall 2026

Lilly Kujawski
Managing Editor - News

Eastern Michigan University Board of Regents approved a 3.42% overall increase to meal plan rates for fiscal year 2027 at the latest board meeting. Meal plan rates are set to increase between \$110-160, depending on the type of plan. The apartment plan, which allows five meals per week and one Flex, will not increase. Previously, the overall meal plan rate increased 3.6% for the current academic year's prices. The 3.42% increase is the lowest increase meal plans have seen in the last five years, showed data presented in the Board of Regents meeting packet. Regents present voted yes on the increase except Regent Jenita Moore, who voted no. Regents Chad Newton and Marquis Thomey were not present at the Feb. 12 meeting. Moore told *The Eastern Echo* that her vote against the increase was largely due to student feedback about dining options on campus, after the closure of multiple dining and market locations on campus last August prompted criticism from the student body. "Based on just listening to students over the course of time about the opposition of what has happened, what we shut down, what has moved,

changed, I was concerned ... overall with the increase," Moore said. "How would this impact students?" Moore said she has questions about whether the increase will result in a better experience for students. "Until I see what will transpire, I have to say no," she said. "Some things require us to have to do an increase, but right now, I don't feel food is one of them." Information presented to the board explained the financial considerations behind the decision to increase the meal plan rate. "This increase accounts for cost increases in both food and labor, as inflation continues to put pressure on the food service industry. Food inflation, while down from historic highs of 7% and 8% in FY23 and FY24, is still outpacing historical averages," stated information presented to the board. "EMU's meal plan prices continue to be in line with similar colleges and universities in our area and across the nation." Depending on the type of plan a student selects, rates at EMU currently range from \$2,075-3,550, which is on par with comparable universities in Michigan. At Central Michigan University, student meal plans are currently \$3,050 per semester. On



From left, Regents Jessie K.W. Kimbrough and Michael Hawks, Vice President and Secretary to the Board of Regents Vicki Reaume, Board Chairperson Nate Ford, President James Smith, and Regents Jenita Moore, and Anupam Chugh Sudhu at the Feb. 12, Board of Regents meeting in Welch Hall. *Courtney Prielipp / The Eastern Echo*

Feb. 12, the CMU Board of Trustees approved an increase of \$122 for all meal plans, beginning in the fall. At Western Michigan University, residence hall meal plans cost slightly less, ranging from \$2,809-3,130.50. At a December meeting, WMU trustees approved a 3.5% increase to meal plan rates, meeting minutes showed. During the EMU Board of Regents meeting, Moore said she had concerns about food and financial insecurity in students.

At EMU, 46.5% of students experience some level of food insecurity, said Graduate Student Colton Ray in a previous interview with *The Echo*. Ray works at Swoop's Pantry, EMU's on-campus food pantry. Swoop's is located on the first floor of Pierce Hall and is open 12-6 p.m. on Mondays and 12-5 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday. For information about Swoop's offerings and to fill out an intake form, visit the pantry's webpage.

WEMU celebrates new office in Halle Library



EMU Regent Jessie K.W. Kimbrough, U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell, EMU Regent Jenita Moore, WEMU General Manager Molly Motherwell, EMU Regent Nate Ford, Executive Director Emeritus of the WEMU Broadcast Center Art Timko, EMU President James Smith, and EMU Regent Anupam Chugh Sidhu stand together cutting the ribbon and opening the Timko broadcasting station, located at the Halle Library. *Courtney Prielipp / The Eastern Echo*

Gray Connor
Managing Editor - Operations

WEMU, Eastern Michigan University's National Public Radio jazz and blues radio station, has officially relocated to the Halle Library after a long tenure in King Hall. On Feb. 12, WEMU staff and EMU President James Smith cut the ribbon in front of WEMU's new office, located on the ground floor of the Halle Library across from the computer lab. According to Smith, the change comes as a much-needed upgrade, with all new improvements to the individual

office spaces, physical media library and equipment. "This is an incredibly proud moment for Eastern Michigan University," Smith said. With the support of the Board of Regents, EMU fully funded the change in location. "Being a community-engaged university is making outreach to the community, and that's exactly what WEMU does all day and every day," Smith said. "I believe that the excellence you've heard in the past will be even greater." The new broadcast location, now

called "The Timko Broadcast Center," is named after Art Timko, who served as the executive director emeritus of the broadcast center. His work with WEMU spanned over 42 years, after first joining the station as a student employee in 1967. The recognition came after a resolution from the Board of Regents, which formally renamed the station and emphasized its unwavering commitment to community service, journalistic focus on Washtenaw County, and dedication to the preservation of roots, jazz and blues. Board of Regents Chairperson Nate Ford spoke on the motivation behind the change in WEMU's location, as well as the decision to name the new station after Timko. "This moment is not simply about a building. It's about a legacy, about people whose vision, leadership and commitment have shaped WEMU into the cultural institution it is today," Ford said. "Nobody embodies that legacy more fully than Art Timko." Ford expressed the deep impact that WEMU has made across its 61 years on air throughout Southeast Michigan, with Timko serving as one of three general managers throughout. "The Detroit Jazz Festival broadcast, the Depot Town broadcast and the Frog Island Festivals, all of the attempts we made to connect audiences with performers, and perform a community service that wasn't being provided," Timko said. "Just amazing."

Alongside the change in location, the move also came with the task of relocating over 175,000 pieces of physical media owned by the station, made up of vinyl records and CDs. Marc Taras, a music broadcaster at WEMU for 29 years, now works as the station's staff librarian, sorting through all of the physical media that comes through the station. According to Taras, having physical versions of songs and albums helps the station offer listeners a more well-rounded experience. "Having the hard copy allows us to deepen the story," Taras said. When preparing songs for play, broadcasters can use the physical copies to tell those tuning in more information about not just the artist or group but also about all of those who took part in a track or album's creation. According to Mat Hopson, The Morning Edition producer, much of the equipment used by WEMU in King Hall dated back to the early 1980s. Now, the new equipment has been almost entirely digitized, allowing those working at the station to have more flexibility. WEMU specializes in roots, jazz and blues and features National Public Radio classics like "All Things Considered," which reports on daily news updates. To listen to WEMU's live broadcast and to find more information on the station's various programs, visit the station's website at wemu.org.

Presidential transition

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

University priorities Kelly's top priority for EMU is to focus on enrollment and retention, an ongoing challenge area for the university and other institutions. Nationally, universities face a demographic cliff, as states, including Michigan, report declining birth rates, bringing down the high school graduate population, reported the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. In the fall 2025 semester, year-over-year freshmen enrollment decreased by 18.8% at EMU compared to fall 2024, Katie Condon, vice president of enrollment management, said in a previous interview with *The Eastern Echo*. By the 2023-2024 school year, EMU had seen a 42% decrease in enrollment since the 2009-2010 school year, showed data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Kelly said he plans to address the financial concerns of declining enrollment by creating marketplace demand around the institution. He also plans to foster what he described as a

culture of continuous improvement. Another priority, Kelly said, is to align the campus community around the university goals and methods of achieving them. "Perhaps the most important is to get all of the people aligned around what we need to be doing, one, and how we are going to do it," Kelly said. "What is the brand that comes along with Eastern Michigan and makes it distinctive from other institutions of higher education? We've been able to achieve that type of alignment at other institutions, and I'm really looking forward to being able to do that here."

Student focus

Kelly said a key area of focus for him will be to win the daily trust of students. He said issues like parking and dining, which have been top concerns for students, are not unique to EMU, and student satisfaction is one of the most important components of a successful university. Kelly said he plans to spend time with students so he can get to know them and find out the why behind some of their concerns.

"If it is a critical priority for students that attend this university, then it is a critical priority for me," Kelly said. Kelly said he plans to face problem areas head-on and address concerns students might have. "There is always going to be things in an institution as complex and large as this one that are not going to be working. So, let's talk about those first," Kelly said. "I like to talk about ... where we're weak much more than just highlighting the places where we're strong." It is important for students to understand how the university operates and be part of the solution to their concerns, Kelly said.

Federal changes

Last year, in 2025, colleges and universities across the country felt the impact of federal government decisions, from changes in financial aid to diversity, equity and inclusion rollbacks. Kelly said he expects 2026 to be as challenging for higher education as 2025 was. Kelly likened policy change for universities to regulatory changes in other industries and prescribed a response rooted in proactivity and

building relationships. "We can influence conversations in Washington to a degree. That's why we have legislative delegations, that's why we have to be present in D.C., and have relationships that allow us to be part of that conversation, so that those legislative delegations can use us as a resource as new policy and rules come out," Kelly said. "We want to be part of the conversation, but we can't control all of that. So from my vantage point, we focus in on the fact that the marketplace has changed, and if new policy comes out, that changes the marketplace." Kelly said radical policy changes seen in higher education require anticipation of future changes and focus on priority areas. "New regulation comes out, it changes the way in which you're going to function, do business and provide services. We're going to proactively try to anticipate those, react when it is appropriate, but most importantly, we're going to focus on the things that are most important and will not change. And the things that will not change are our responsibility to students in the role that we're going to play in their lives," he said.

What's the Move?

Feb. 17 - 23

Allie Beecher
Copy Desk Chief

Looking for something to do this week off campus? Check out this week's list of events.

ConVocation 2026 — Feb. 19-22

A four-day gathering aimed at building community for those who follow mystical and esoteric paths, ConVocation has been bringing together a multitude of classes and rituals each year since 1995, the event's website said. Renowned guest speakers, authors and instructors come together to facilitate learning and community. Some classes, sessions and rituals that will be offered in 2026 include Tarot Every Witch Way, Self Healing Through Frequency, Foundations of Shamanism, and Vampires Among Us (to name a few). ConVocation 2026 will take place Thursday, Feb. 19, through Sunday, Feb. 22 at the Ann Arbor Marriott Ypsilanti Eagle Crest Resort Hotel, located at 1275 S. Huron St. Those interested in attending can register online through Sched. Four-day registration for adults is \$128.36, and four-day registration for children 12-17 years old is \$77.41. For more information, visit www.convocation.org.

Karaoke Donation Drive — Feb. 20

Looking for a way to have fun singing while giving back to the community? Try the Karaoke Donation Drive, which will raise funds for the Daytime Warming Center of Washtenaw County. The DWC provides shelter, food, laundry services, basic supplies and more to those experiencing homelessness in the Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor areas. The Karaoke Donation Drive will take place Friday, Feb. 20, at 734 Brewing Company in Ypsi from 7-11 p.m. Everyone is welcome, but minors must be accompanied by an adult. A donation of \$10 or more to the DWC is suggested. Those interested in participating should write "Karaoke 2/20" in the message box when they send their contributions to www.givebutter.com/CFE26. Receipts serve as tickets for entry to the drive. 734 Brewing Company is at 15 E. Cross St. in Ypsilanti. For more information, visit the event's page on Facebook Events.

Multimodal Zine Workshop — Feb. 21

Get creative at this hands-on Multimodel Zone Workshop with YpsiWrites' Writer in Residence Angelica Esquivel! On Saturday, Feb. 21, from 2-4 p.m., attendees will use a variety of materials and methods to create their own zines. Participants may use stickers, create a collage or even try making origami. This free workshop requires no registration and will take place in the Whittaker Triangular Bay at the Whittaker branch of the Ypsilanti District Library at 5577 Whittaker Road. The event is also part of Esquivel's residency program, and stories created at it are eligible for submission to the anthology she is developing. For more information, visit the YDL website at www.ypsilibrary.org.

Winged Wonders: The Hummingbird/Ask the Master Gardener — Feb. 22.

Join gardener Carol Brodbeck for a session about the ruby-throated hummingbird! From 2-4:30 p.m. in the Whittaker Community Room at the Whittaker branch of the YDL, Brodbeck will discuss the ruby-throated hummingbird's courtship rituals, nesting habits and migration patterns, as well as how gardeners can create a favorable environment for the birds. The Whittaker branch of the YDL is at 5577 Whittaker Road, and the event is free and requires no registration. For more information, visit the YDL website at www.ypsilibrary.org.



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The Echo Q&A Series: Toni Pressley-Sanon talks history and community

Laura Meriweather
News Reporter

Editor’s note: The Eastern Echo staff meets regularly with interesting people on and off campus. Engage in those conversations with us through our Q&A reports.

Toni Pressley-Sanon, a professor of Africology and African American Studies at Eastern Michigan University, became the interim department head in January 2026. At the University of Wisconsin, her doctoral work focused on African languages and culture. Her staff profile states, “Her work dwells on the intersections of memory, history and cultural production in both Africa and the African diaspora.” In her recent book, “Lifting as They Climb: Black Women Buddhists and Collective Liberation,” she reflects on her own experiences with the intersection of Buddhism and race.

Pressley-Sanon sat down with *The Echo* to discuss the past, present and future of Africology and African American Studies at EMU.

Q: What does your day-to-day life look like in this job?

A: Right now, it looks like a lot of learning about different systems in the university. It looks like getting to speak with students about their schedules, but also about their lives and their aspirations. It means getting to work with amazing faculty. It means potentially being able to work with other departments to offer really great courses for our students. It also entails creating a sense of community in the department.

The department was founded at a time of political unrest during the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power movement. It was created out of a sense of a need for an education of liberation. And it was very much community-based, so it’s very important for us to keep that spirit of community engagement alive. So small gestures, celebrating people when they have accomplished something, I think, go a long way. It is not easy to thrive in these environments very often, and creating opportunities for people to come together around food, snacks or music, it helps to create a sense of community. I’ve been working really hard to do that, along with my colleagues, so that’s been fun.

Q: Could you talk about what the history of Black studies at EMU looks like?

A: It is a long, long history; we’ve been here since 1975. It came out of student protests, along with the support of many faculty members. It was part of a larger effort across the country to bring Black studies to university campuses as a result, in part, of more students of color being admitted to universities. People wanted to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. They wanted to see faculty members who looked like them. This was part of a larger push for students to see themselves reflected in what they were being taught, as well as who was teaching them.

EMU was definitely part of that trend. In fact, the “Study and Struggle” exhibit reflects that history where students of all colors were protesting, leaving class in order to join the struggle, writing editorials, just doing all kinds of really amazing things to support the movement forward for Black studies.

The department is very interdisciplinary. My graduate work is in African languages and literature with a minor in Caribbean, Latin American and Iberian studies. We have someone from history, someone from sociology, political scientists, so it is very much interdisciplinary. I think that’s part of what makes it very, very special, is that we are able to pull all these different disciplines together to look at the African and African diasporic experience.

Q: When you say the creation of



Eastern Michigan University Professor and Interim Department Head of Africology and African American Studies Toni Pressley-Sanon sits at her desk in Pray-Harrold on Feb. 12. Laura Meriweather / The Eastern Echo

the department was supported by protests, what does that look like?

A: Those original protests were part of a national movement for students to see themselves reflected, both in the curriculum and in the people who are teaching them. For most of our history, our contributions have been written out of history. You have people like W. E. B. Du Bois, who was really committed to bringing African American studies to publishing and academia. You have African Americans who have founded universities; we’ve always understood that education is power.

I believe that those people, those students from the 1960s who were protesting, who were agitating, were carrying on a legacy from the slave era: people who understood that literacy was power. So this is all part of a longer history. You have that 1960s moment that goes into the 1970s, when we got our department.

Over the years, there have also been instances of racist aggression on campus. When I came to campus, there were several horrific racist incidents on campus, and there was massive student uprising or protest. Several students actually occupied the student union. It was a very difficult time. Out of those protests, students came up with a 10-point plan, and part of it was the demand that our department have a master’s program. So we developed it and got it approved by the Board of Regents. There is some painful history around where we are now, but we also understand that these are the origins of our department as well. So it’s not new to us.

Q: What themes or issues accurately represent what that looks like here at EMU?

A: I would say most of all, we would not be here without student activism. It’s really important to understand and remember how important students are for us to be able to do what we do. The reason that the department was even founded was because of student protests and student agitation, student interest. It’s really our job to follow the lead of students, because honestly, they’re the ones who will take us where we need to go. I think that’s what’s always forefront in my mind. I also am very committed to, “I am because we are,” which is a longstanding African principle, that we stand on others’ shoulders, and others stand on our shoulders. Basically, we need each other; our fates are intertwined, and we can definitely see this in the origins of our department as well as in the future of the department.

Q: Could you speak more to what the sense of community looks like outside of the department, and in general?

A: I think that Ypsi is really special. There’s a sense that people will look out for each other in this area. There’s a long African American history here. I love that we have so many local businesses. We have a Black-owned bookshop, we have Black-owned stores here that we can support. I feel like this is a place where people of color feel like they can thrive. I think EMU has a lot to do with that.

I do know that in the early part of the history, the students of EMU used to go into the community and serve

breakfast, which is something that the Black Panther Party used to do. So we do have that history. One of the things that I’m working on as department head is re-establishing some of those relationships. I’m planning to go to a local high school and talk with students about African American sculptors, for example. I think our presence in some of these other spaces is really important so that they know that EMU was there for them as much as they are here for EMU.

I’ve been really deliberate about making sure that we share events that are happening on campus at the library, at the bookstores, at the coffee shops in town, because I really want to bring more of the Ypsi community into EMU spaces and vice versa. So I am, like, beating the drum for faculty to venture out into Ypsi and to be part of the community. I mean, we wouldn’t be here without this community, because most of our students come from the immediate environment or Flint and Detroit. So we really need to continue to establish our relationship and build our bond.

Q: Where do you see, or where would you like to see, the department go from here?

A: I’ve got big hopes for the department. I think it’s vitally important to our student population. I think it’s vitally important to the university. I think it’s vitally important to our society at large. It’s really, really important to be able to have open, respectful conversations about how we got where we are, why this history is still important, and how we cannot really envision a different future if we don’t know where we’ve come from. I know there’s always this rhetoric about leaving the past in the past, but we have to understand that the reason we are in this position today is because of what’s happened in the past.

I think what our department does is an incredible service to humanity, and anybody who wants to interact with the department to really engage in deep conversation around some of these issues that are incredibly prescient today, have been in the past, and will be in the future. I think that comes from a history of community and a history of care. It’s not only what’s being taught, but also how it’s being taught. It’s really, really important. My big hope is that we will be able to grow the department, that as many people as possible will be able to take advantage of what it is that we have to offer, which is immense. The more that people engage, the more we can envision something better, something bigger and something grander. And so my hope is that this 100th anniversary of Black History Month, this 50th anniversary of the department, is the beginning of a hopeful new chapter in our department, and in the university at large, with the department integral to the university.

Read the full Q&A on easternecho.com.



Opinion

The WellNest Watch

The Social Determinants of Health



Nathaniel King
Contributor

Editor’s note: In *The WellNest Watch*, master’s degree candidates in the public health program at Eastern Michigan University’s School of Health Promotion and Human Performance explore news, research and standard practices in the field of health and wellness.

A common assumption surrounding our health is that personal everyday decisions, such as what we eat, where we eat, our activity levels that day, and other similar factors are all that make up our health. Moving from a personal focus to a community-centered approach fills in the gaps that explain our health behaviors. Personal factors do impact our overall health, but let’s look at what drives us to make these decisions in the first place.

The Social Determinants of Health are the outside conditions that influence an individual’s health. The SDOH are categorized into five domains: economic stability; education access and quality; healthcare access and quality; neighborhood and your built environment; and social and community context. Let’s explore these domains and understand the effect they have on our overall health.

The SDOH connect your everyday lived experiences and address how these factors affect your health in a variety of ways. Your economic stability is directly tied to your income level, as well as the employment opportunities in your area. Education access and opportunity are directly tied to your literacy level, as well as access to academic materials in and outside of the classroom. Your education and access to higher education impact your job opportunities, income level and career stability. Healthcare access is not just your access to healthcare but also your understanding of the healthcare system. Your ability to seek and access primary care, understand insurance requirements and how to use insurance, and your ability to get medication are part of healthcare access and quality. Your neighborhood and built environment is where you live. Are there safe areas to spend time outside, sidewalks to get daily exercise in, local gyms, playgrounds, clean air, clean water to drink, and low exposures to toxic materials? All of these factors determine how people live in their communities and the everyday decisions that they make. The last domain is social and community context. This domain focuses on your social support and safety. It addresses how safe you feel in your community, how connected you feel to others, and the services offered in your community. These domains have a huge role in shaping your overall health and access to resources to better your health and the ability to make more informed

health decisions.

The SDOH highlight the inequalities that show up in communities and show how these outside influences impact our health. For example, an individual who lives in a food desert (an area that lacks access to fresh and affordable food, most often reliant on corner stores and fast food restaurants) may eat more processed foods. From the outside perspective, we often hear that we should eat a more nutritious diet, more fruit, and less red meat. Using the SDOH, we can see that this person lacks access to these foods to make diet changes.

Issues such as those above are often multi-faceted and more complex than making a simple change. Food deserts are not often a standalone issue in a community. Food deserts are often found in rural areas and neighborhoods of lower socioeconomic status. Residents in these areas may face transportation access issues due to income, public transportation limitations, a lack of time to cook due to work, a lack of nutrition knowledge due to gaps in education funding, housing instability, low levels of social support, and a lack of resources needed to cook a healthier meal. Looking at this, we are able to see how complex eating better can be. This example can be applied to many other health factors, such as housing access, furthering your education, increasing your health literacy, and getting daily exercise.

Health is often more complex than personal actions. The SDOH allows public health professionals to see the gaps in community services and areas to create more equitable communities. Addressing these issues is key to reducing negative health outcomes. This allows public health professionals to advocate for equity and have an equity-centered approach to health. Strengthening community support creates more equitable communities that are more sustainable for providing residents with the resources and knowledge they need to have better health outcomes. Health behavior is not a personal decision but a wider decision impacted by your ability to access resources needed to make these decisions. This approach to health allows us as professionals and community members to strengthen these dimensions and remove barriers to achieving better health.

Editor’s note: Contributors to *The WellNest Watch* health column are 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 Public Health Program from the School of Public Health Promotion and Human Performance at EMU.



Instagram @easternechoofficial

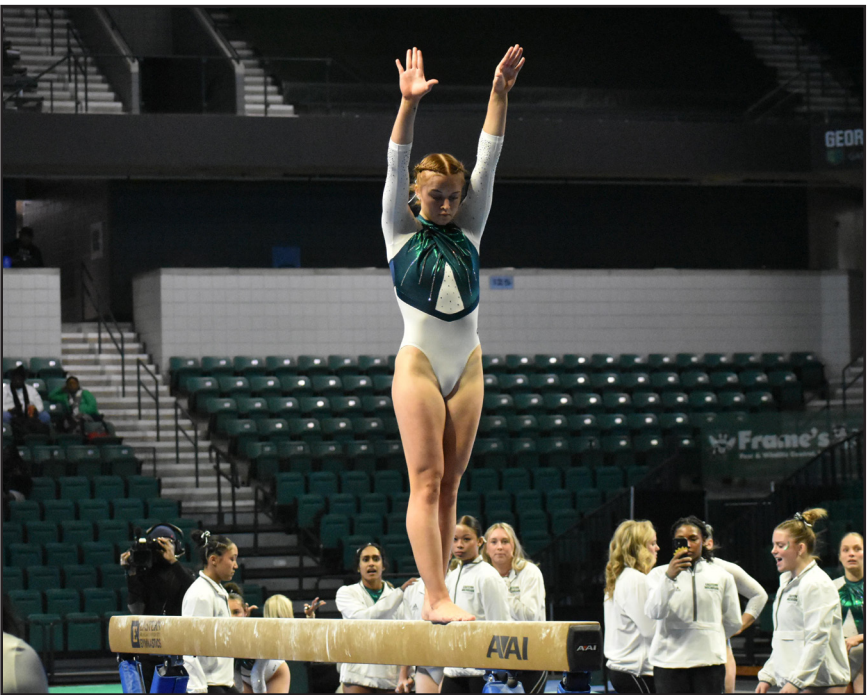


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Eagle Watch | Feb. 9-15



Katin Childress starts her routine on the balance beam on Thursday, Jan. 29 in the meet against Wilberforce at the George Gervin GameAbove Center. *Max Taylor / The Eastern Echo*

Ruby Brannon
Sports Editor

Alli Zajac: Women’s basketball

Alli Zajac recently delivered a standout performance for the Eastern Michigan University women’s basketball team in their game against Ball State University. The Tecumseh, Michigan native recorded a career-high 13 points, representing her first career game scoring in double figures. Zajac was particularly effective from long range, connecting on a career-best three triples during her 11:48 on the court. This milestone performance underscores her growing impact as a reliable offensive threat for the Eagles.

Braelon Green: Men’s basketball

Braelon Green, a guard from Southfield, Michigan, made a

significant impact in his return to the starting lineup for the Eagles. During a competitive matchup against Kent State University, Green tallied 15 points and recorded 34 minutes of play. He displayed his shooting range by tying a career-high with three successful 3-pointers. Beyond scoring, Green contributed across the stat sheet with three rebounds, two assists and two steals for Eastern Michigan.

Kelsey Dague: Women’s lacrosse

Kelsey Dague, a midfielder from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, delivered a standout performance in Eastern Michigan’s 14-11 victory over Lindenwood University. After missing the 2025 season due to injury, she netted her first goals of 2026 with a hat trick. This milestone marked her third career hat trick and her first since April 2024. Her offensive contributions were instrumental in helping the Eagles

achieve the best start in program history.

Aleah Johnson: Women’s track and field

Aleah Johnson, a senior from Botkins, Ohio, delivered a standout performance at the Grand Valley State University Big Meet-Friday in Allendale, Michigan. Competing in the weight throw, Johnson secured seventh place with a distance of 16.97 meters (55 feet and 8.25 inches). This mark is among her best this indoor season, highlighted by a career-high 17.38m throw set in January 2026. Johnson continues to solidify her position as a leader for the Eastern Michigan throwing unit.

Ty Dailey: Men’s track and field

Ty Dailey, a junior from Phoenix, Maryland, delivered an impressive performance at the GVSU Big Meet-Friday in Allendale, Michigan. Competing in the 800m, Dailey secured a second-place finish with a career-best time of 1 minute, 52.54 seconds. This standout mark represents his fastest indoor collegiate time in the event. A mechanical engineering major, Dailey also competed in the 4x400 relay during the meet, continuing his strong season as a versatile middle-distance leader for the Eagles.

Regina Mendez Carreño: Women’s tennis

Regina Mendez Carreño, a native of Los Cabos, Mexico, played a key role in Eastern Michigan’s 4-3 road victory over DePaul University. Competing at No. 5 singles, Mendez Carreño secured a convincing 6-1, 6-3 win against Helin Alvarez, which helped build a critical 3-1 lead for the Eagles. Additionally, she and partner Iva Daneva earned a walkover victory at No. 3 doubles. Her strong performance was vital in

snapping the team’s three-match losing streak.

Katin Childress: Gymnastics

Katin Childress, a junior from Prosper, Texas, delivered a standout performance for the Eastern Michigan gymnastics squad at the annual Purple Meet against Central Michigan University. Specializing in the balance beam, Childress captured the event title with a stellar score of 9.850, leading the Eagles’ highest-scoring rotation of the day. A business major who joined EMU in 2025, Childress continues to be a force on the beam, building on a strong sophomore season where she posted a career-high 9.875.

Jasmine Leovao: Women’s golf

Senior Jasmine Leovao is a premier talent to watch for the Eastern Michigan women’s golf program. Currently ranked No. 92 nationally, the Oceanside, California native transferred to EMU after a decorated career at Long Beach State University that included two Big West individual titles. Leovao maintains a 70.6 scoring average and recently secured a runner-up finish at the Rainbow Wahine Invitational. Her veteran leadership and technical skills are vital as the Eagles continue their spring slate.

Ty Stecko: Baseball

Utility player Ty Stecko is a major offensive force to watch as Eastern Michigan baseball begins its 2026 season. The 6-foot-2 senior from North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania delivered a standout 2025 campaign, leading the Eagles with a team-high 0.591 slugging percentage and 11 home runs. Stecko, a computer science major who batted 0.325 last year, combines defensive versatility with a powerful 1.015 OPS. His ability to drive in runs will be a critical component of the EMU lineup throughout the year.

'Keys to the car': Trevor Beerman and new faces lead EMU baseball into 2026

Ruby Brannon
Sports Editor

The familiar sounds of baseball are ready to echo through Ypsilanti again as Eastern Michigan University baseball prepares for a 2026 campaign defined by transition and high expectations. While snow may still cover the ground, the program is already looking toward the Mid-American Conference tournament in Avon, Ohio.

This season marks a new era following the departure of head coach Robbie Britt to the Boston Red Sox organization. Stepping into the void is interim head coach Trevor Beerman, who previously served as the team’s recruiting coordinator. Beerman described the sudden transition as an incredible chance for leadership, noting that “anytime you get ... the keys to the car, it’s a great opportunity.”

A brotherhood under new leadership

The coaching staff has been further fortified with the addition of Seth Caddell as assistant coach and recruiting coordinator, alongside Andrew DiTullio as offensive coordinator and former player Harrison Travis as hitting coach. Despite the staff turnover, the locker room remains remarkably unified. Senior infielder Devan Zirwas highlighted this chemistry, calling the 2026 squad the “best of a brotherhood that we’ve had” during his tenure.

Beerman echoed this sentiment, stating that this group is “probably the closest group I’ve had a chance to be around.”

This sense of camaraderie is expected to be the backbone of the team as they navigate a challenging schedule.

Offensive firepower and analytics

The Eagles’ offense, which hit 0.289 as a team in 2025, returns several

key veterans while adding significant transfer talent. Senior Ty Stecko has spent the offseason “cleaning up” his swing to set better angles for ball flight, jokingly setting a personal goal of “probably around 20” home runs.

Zirwas also returns with a focus on his launch angle and consistency, fueled by the belief the coaching staff has instilled in him.

Perhaps the most anticipated addition is Leewood Molessa, a standout transfer from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Stecko praised Molessa as “one of the best hitters I’ve been around in my career.”

Molessa himself believes the team will thrive if they “play our game and play maturely,” adding that they have “nothing to lose.”

To aid this offensive development, the program continues to leverage advanced technology. Oestrike Stadium is now equipped with the TrackMan Stadium V3 and AWRE camera systems, which track data points such as exit velocity, spin rate and launch angles to help players understand their performance on a granular level.

Pitching strategy: The ‘race to two’

On the mound, the Eagles must replace several top players, including Drew Beckner and Tyler Kapa. Senior Ethan Davis returns as a leader for a pitching staff that is shifting its focus toward efficiency. Davis emphasized a new mentality focused on getting ahead early in counts and putting hitters in two-strike situations quickly. The staff aims to get in and out of innings in roughly seven minutes to keep momentum on their side. Beerman, drawing on his own background as a former pitcher, will take an overhead view of the staff to ensure they are prepared for high-leverage moments. New transfer arms like John Carmichael and Landon Mueller are expected to fill key roles in the weekend rotation.



The fully renovated Oestrike Stadium, the home of the Eastern Michigan baseball team, sits completed following 18 months of renovations. *Courtesy of EMU Athletics*

The new Oestrike Stadium experience

Fans returning to Oestrike Stadium will witness a total physical transformation of the ballpark. The most striking change is the unique gray turf infield, the first of its kind in EMU history. Stecko believes this provides a distinct home-field advantage because opponents might not be used to playing on it.

Additionally, the field dimensions have been strategically altered; the home plate has been moved out 10 feet, while the outfield fences remain in place. For player safety, the outfield now features padded fences, which allows players to aggressively chase fly balls without fear of injury. The dugouts have also been expanded, providing a more professional environment for the roster.

Success beyond the diamond

The program’s culture of excellence extends to the classroom and the community. The team recently achieved a 3.609 record-setting GPA, the

highest in program history. Beerman emphasized that the program is built on three pillars: winning on the field, in the classroom, and in the community.

A ‘gauntlet’ schedule

The 2026 season begins with a 16-game road trip, starting Feb. 13, at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. This gauntlet features mid-week matchups against national powerhouses, including a two-game set at Vanderbilt University (Feb. 17-18) and a trip to the University of Notre Dame (March 3). The Eagles will finally return home for their opener against Michigan State University on March 11.

Beerman views this early adversity as essential preparation for the MAC, a one-bid league where every conference game is vital. The ultimate goal remains a return to Avon for the MAC Championship from May 20-24. As Beerman put it, while championships aren’t won in February, the team must stay together through the early tests to reach their full potential.

Eagle Sports Tips & Tales:

Feb. 17-23

Ruby Brannon
Sports Editor

Men’s basketball

Feb. 17 vs. Central Michigan University:

The Eagles are looking to even the score after a tough 65-100 road loss to CMU earlier this season.

Feb. 21 at the University of Toledo:

Eastern will look to build on the momentum of their most recent 80-73 win over the Rockets in 2025.

Both games will be streamed on ESPN with radio coverage provided by WEMU and the Varsity Network.

Baseball

Feb. 17, 18 at Vanderbilt University:

This is a rare Power Five matchup for the Eagles. Their only previous meeting was a competitive 2-6 loss March 5, 2024, in Nashville. Both games of this midweek series will be broadcast on SECN+.

Feb. 20, 21, 22 at Austin Peay State University:

Austin Peay currently holds a slight 5-3 edge in the overall series history. All three games of this weekend’s series will be streamed on ESPN+.

Gymnastics

Feb. 20 at Temple University:

The Eagles have historically dominated the Owls at home and are 3-0 but have found more resistance in Philadelphia, where they hold a 1-2 away record. Watch the meet live on ESPN+.

Feb. 22 at George Washington University, Towson University and Fisk University:

This is a high-stakes quad-meet. The Eagles are looking for their first-ever win against George Washington, having gone 0-4 since the series began in 2014. The Eagles will need to break a two-meet losing streak against Towson to regain control of that series, which they currently lead 4-2. Check emueagles.com for live stats.

Lacrosse

Feb. 18 at Canisius University:

Watch for second-half surges; in their previous win over Canisius, the Eagles outscored the Golden Griffins 3-0 in the second quarter to build a decisive lead.

Feb. 22 at the University of Oregon:

The team enters this road trip with momentum following a come-from-behind 9-7 victory over Xavier University earlier in February. Fans can follow live updates through the EMU Athletics page.

Men’s golf

Feb. 16 and 17, Hal Williams Collegiate:

All eyes are on Charlie Box, who holds a team-low 69.9 scoring average and has been named Mid-American Conference Golfer of the Week three times this season. Fans can follow the tournament’s progress through live scoring on the EMU Athletics page.

Women’s basketball

Feb. 21 vs. University at Buffalo:

The Eagles are high on confidence after beating the Bulls 71-51 on the road just a few weeks ago. This home game at the George Gervin GameAbove Center will be available to stream on ESPN+.

Men’s, women’s track and field

Feb. 20 Silverston Invitational at Michigan:

The Eagles are in top form, recently securing four program Top 10 marks at the Michigan Invitational earlier this year. Check the Eastern Athletics website for results.

Women’s tennis

Feb. 20 vs. Bradley University:

Eastern is looking for its first win against Bradley after dropping the inaugural 2021 meeting 1-4. Fans can access live stats on the Eastern Athletics website.

Read the full article on easternecho.com



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Africology and African American Studies exhibit showcases 50 years of history



Part of the “Study and Struggle: 50 Years of African American Studies at EMU” gallery is a display of the Sept. 14, 1970, print of *The Eastern Echo* newspaper, showing the regents approved a Black Studies major and minor at Eastern Michigan University. *Courtesy Prielipp / The Eastern Echo*

Hannah Borders
News Reporter

This academic year, the Department of Africology and African American Studies is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

In 1975, Eastern Michigan University established a program for African American Studies as a minor. The program was later established as a department, which is an important distinction on the university level, said Peter Blackmer, an associate professor

of Africology and African American Studies at EMU.

In 1990, EMU became the first university in Michigan to offer a bachelor’s degree in Africology and African American Studies and in 2018, became the first university in Michigan to offer it as a master’s degree.

In celebration of the milestones and history of the department, Blackmer and students curated a gallery in Halle Library that will be open through Feb 28. Some of the students that helped curate the gallery include Ramses Leon, Cheaney Ferguson and Victoria Huguley. The exhibit is called “Study & Struggle: 50 Years of African American Studies at EMU.” The gallery is open during Halle Library’s regular hours.

Halle Library is open 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Sundays, 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays. The reception for the gallery was held Tuesday, Feb 10.

“The department of Africology and African American Studies at Eastern has a history that I don’t think a lot of people are familiar with. The exhibit is designed to introduce students, faculty members, community members to what it has taken over the last 50 years to create, expand, and sustain the department of Africology and African American Studies,” Blackmer said.

The exhibit features photographs, videos, typed documents and oral histories. The oral histories are there so visitors can hear from some of the people featured in the exhibit in their own words and their own telling of the histories they’re a part of.

“In particular, some of the documents from the Black Student Union around 1969, there’s one that says ‘What we want, what we need’, and when you read through that particular statement, it’s playing out some of the philosophies and bigger visions and demands of the Black Student Association. When you read that in the context of the era you can see very clearly some of the influences of the Black Panther party on the language, on the politics, on the ideologies, and so finding that document really showed to me and to Ramses some of the ways the black power era was specifically impacting and influencing students organizing at Eastern in the late 1960s,” Blackmer said.

Leon, a double major in Africology and African American Studies and political science, worked with Blackmer over the summer to curate the first part of the exhibit. They went through the archival collections relating to the Black Student Union and campus demonstration records and picked ones that best told the story.

“We started off by going through the

archives and figuring out two questions: What’s the story we’re trying to tell, and how do we tell that story? Once we figured out which story we wanted to tell, we had to figure out how we wanted to tell that story. So we tried to be intentional in curating materials in the exhibit that really tell the story of the role of student activists, faculty members, and community members in planning to create and to grow the department of Africology and African American Studies. So in there you’ll see a lot of typed documents from flyers, to meeting minutes, to statements of demand, so that visitors can get a better sense of the things that student activists were fighting for in different areas,” Blackmer said.

Ferguson, an Africology and African American Studies major, helped to curate the final section by reaching out to alumni and getting interviews with them to learn about the significance and importance of African American Studies today.

Huguley, an Africology and African American Studies major, worked on the section that shows more recent student protests and movements. They focused on the 2016 Black Student Union protest against campus racism. That protest was one of the contributing factors to EMU first offering a master’s degree in Africology and African American Studies in 2018.

EMU Theatre explores grief, family and mathematics with 'Proof'

Gray Connor
Managing Editor - Operations

Eastern Michigan University Theatre shows audiences how complicated life can get when family mixes with mathematics.

Directed by Meriah Sage, an associate professor and director of the Applied Drama and Theatre for the Young program at EMU, “Proof” follows 25-year-old Catherine after the death of her father and the reappearance of Claire, her previously estranged sister.

Eliot Bates, a sophomore studying theater arts at EMU, serves as one of the production’s assistant stage managers.

“[Catherine] is a little troubled after her dad went crazy, and she’s scared that she’ll end up like him,” Bates said. “They’re both very into math, and Catherine’s dad was revolutionary in the math field.”

After Catherine’s father passes

away, a revelatory proof is found in his desk. Catherine, the actual author of it, spends much of the production attempting to prove her authorship to her father’s peer, as well as to Claire.

“Catherine is the central figure of ‘Proof.’ It kind of circles around doubts, and the doubts that other people have about her,” said Morgan Stillson, who plays Catherine’s understudy. “She’s a very strong-willed and sassy person and likes to dig her heels in. I admire that about her.”

While the story explores themes of feminism and grief, it also explores complex family dynamics and how loss can change them.

Frankie Cramer, who studies theater arts, entertainment and design at EMU, plays Claire. After losing their father to an unspecified disease similar to dementia, Claire takes on more of a nurturing role towards Catherine.

“[Claire] wants to protect her sister and take care of her, while

simultaneously trying to make her happy,” Cramer said. “But her method goes very unappreciated.”

While both the main cast and understudy run will be performing based on the same script, the two shows offer completely different performances, according to the cast and crew, with the main cast and understudy actors approaching each character with a different interpretation.

“Come into it with an open mind and understanding that everyone has a different story, and everyone is human,” Cramer said.

The play will be in EMU’s Sponberg Theatre Feb. 19-21, at 7 p.m., and Feb. 21 and 22 at 2 p.m. To purchase tickets online, visit EMU Theatre’s website, or purchase them in person at the Judy Sturgis Hall box office. All performances are recommended for ages 13 and up.

The understudy run for “Proof” will be Feb. 21 at 7 p.m.



Makiyah Harris playing Catherine (left), a grieving mathematician, sits beside her sister Claire, played by senior Frankie Cramer in EMU Theatre’s upcoming play, “Proof.” *Courtesy of EMU Theatre*

Putt-R-Round new location, mini-golf offers putt arcade



The window at Putt-R-Round overlooks Michigan Avenue and Washington Street. *Katherine Tatomir / The Eastern Echo*

Katherine Tatomir
Newsletter Editor

On Feb. 1, Putt-R-Round owners Jef Jenkins and Jade Weber closed their doors. Three days later, they opened new doors just down the block.

Putt-R-Round, now located at 130 W. Michigan Ave. in Ypsilanti, offers an 18-hole mini golf course as well as a putt arcade in which players can putt for prizes.

The husband and wife owners have already begun to take advantage of the new location’s spaciousness and separate event room. The bigger space allows for more putt arcade games to be available to customers at one time,

and the event room can be reserved for parties.

“We only had the space for four or five (putt arcade games) at the other shop, but now we can have all seven,” Jenkins said.

Jenkins and Weber managed to move into the new location in just two days with the help of some friends. The team was able to get the courses set up in time for customers to enjoy, but arranging decor is still a work in progress.

“It’s fully functional, but not fully decorated,” Jenkins explained.

With an upgraded location come more opportunities to expand services, an area that Jenkins and Weber have

already begun to explore. The pair have ideas about launching glow golf and building a greater variety of putt arcade games.

Putt-R-Round offers an 18-hole mini golf course and a putt arcade mini golf skill game that allows players to win tickets to redeem for prizes. It is open 4-10 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays, 4-11 p.m. on Fridays, 12-11 p.m. on Saturdays, and 12-8 p.m. on Sundays. It is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays. No reservations are necessary to play.

For more information on services and pricing, visit puttround.com. For other updates, visit Putt-R-Round’s Facebook @Putt-R-Round.



Instagram @easternechoofficial



TikTok @theeasternecho



Facebook @ The Eastern Echo

Blinking Light | AJ Grams



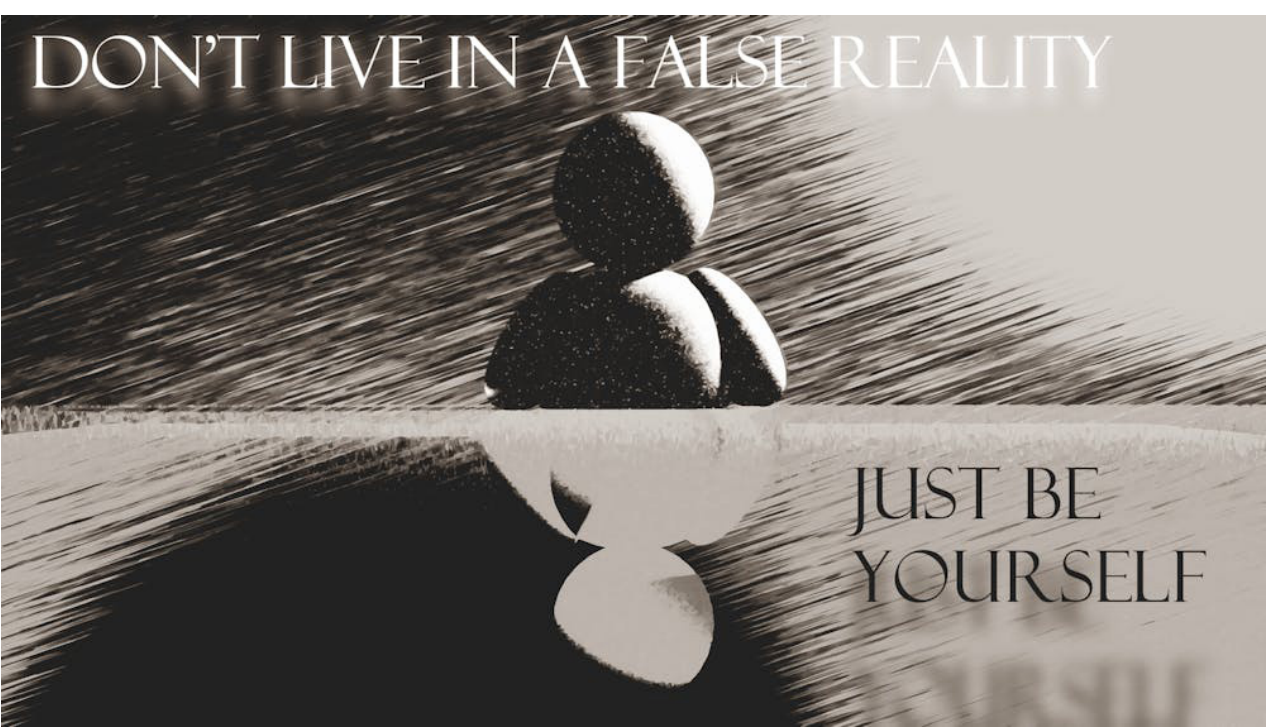
Comic Inspiration | Julia Bartlett



Myself | Rylee Curley



Yourself | Yiri



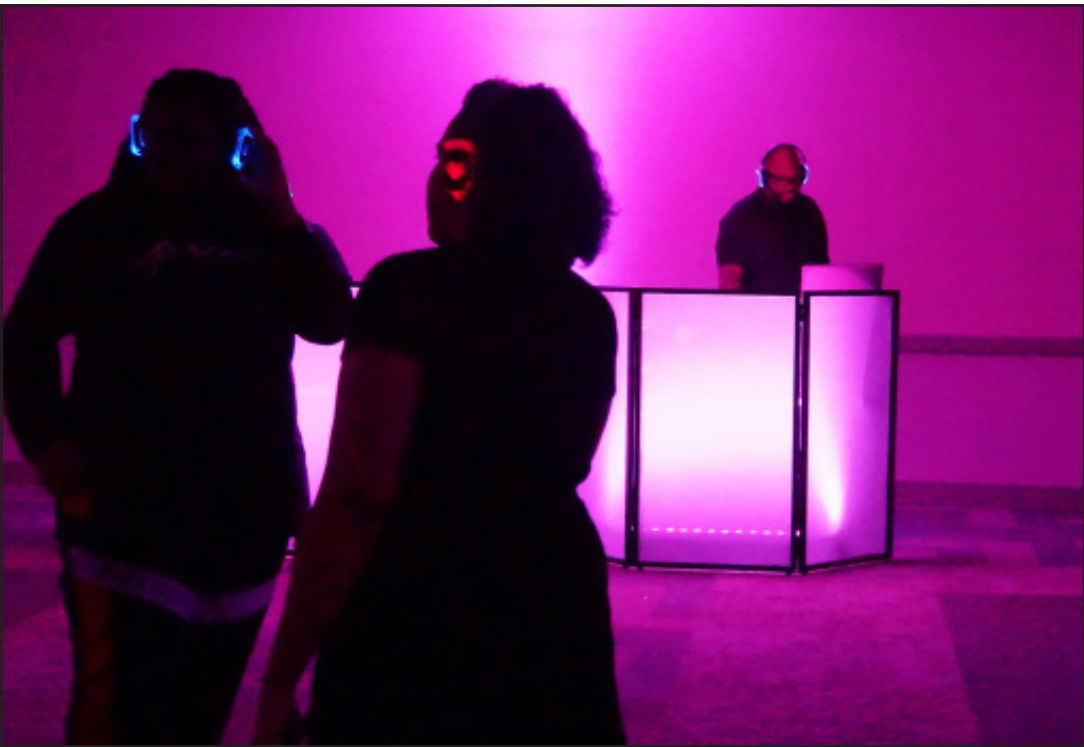
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Last week at a glance, Feb. 10-14



Students help themselves at the Be Your Own Valentine mocktail station on the second floor of the Student Center, right outside the Ballroom doors on Tuesday, Feb. 10. *Owen Cardenas / The Eastern Echo*



Two students dance together in front of the DJ at the Be Your Own Valentine silent disco in the Student Center Ballroom on Tuesday, Feb. 10. *Owen Cardenas / The Eastern Echo*



Reporter Kevin Meerschaert shows guests the brand new and modern equipment that he will be operating at the new WEMU station in Halle Library on Feb. 12. *Courtney Prielipp / The Eastern Echo*



At the Disability Revolution Club’s Panel Exploring Disability and Relationships hosted at the Student Center on Feb. 13, Sean Edwards offers suggestions on how Eastern Michigan can make events more accessible, including offering fidgets and ear plugs to guests. *Maddy Makin / The Eastern Echo*



Sophomore Midfield player of Eastern Michigan’s Lacrosse, No. 26 Emerson Henry, takes a breather between action in the game against Lindenwood on Feb. 11. *Bea Dingman / The Eastern Echo*



Attack player No. 23 Mackenzie Blackwell takes possession of the ball after a midfield faceoff Feb. 14, at the Women’s Lacrosse game versus Xavier University at Eastern Michigan’s Indoor Practice Facility. *Maddy Makin / The Eastern Echo*



Eastern Michigan University Regent Jessie K.W. Kimbrough presents Toni Pressley-Sanon, interim department head and professor of Africology and African American Studies, with an award for recognizing the department’s 50-year anniversary at the Feb. 12, Board of Regents meeting. *Courtney Prielipp / The Eastern Echo*