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**Subject:** Legislative Session + Support for ESU

**Date:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 at 10:55:16 AM Central Standard Time

EMPORIA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

## Office of the President

February 7, 2023

Dear Hornet Nation,

We are just over one month into the new year, and we are off and running! There is much progress happening on campus. Thank you to Amy Sage Webb-Baza, James Ehlers and Liberal Arts + Sciences faculty who had two productive sessions last week and yesterday as they work to restructure their college.

There is also positive activity happening in Topeka. The legislative session opened January 9 and ESU's Government Relations Officer Greg Schneider has been meeting with key legislative leaders throughout the month. Building these relationships is especially important as one-third of our budget is comprised of state funding.

It is important that our lawmakers know the tremendous value ESU delivers to our students, community and state. This is a historic session for ESU as we are creating the solutions to solve for the financial realities that have been discovered at ESU and are systemic throughout higher education. To that end, we spent last Tuesday sharing The ESU Model and our strategic vision for the future with key state legislative leaders including:

- Speaker of the House Dan Hawkins (ESU Alum)
- Higher Education Budget Committee Chairman Steven Howe
- Senate President Ty Masterson
- Senate Ways + Means Chair Rick Billinger
- House Minority Leader Vic Miller (ESU Alum)
- House Appropriations Chair Troy Waymaster
- Local Representation: Senator Jeff Longbine + Representative Mark Schreiber (Alum)

We shared with them our commitment to continuously evolve in response to the pressures facing higher education to build an ESU that delivers the best experience to today's students. We specifically shared the following commitments:

- Elevate the student experience (in and out of the classroom)
- Implement program investments to elevate the degree programs that students want
- Identify and pilot new degree completion concepts to best serve students and their families
- Financial stewardship with accountability to stakeholders including the Kansas taxpayers who fund us

It was a tremendously successful day in that all the meetings were productive and advanced The ESU Model. We continue to receive wonderful support from our network, including faculty, staff, alumni, community, Kansas Board of Regents and legislators — all critical partners on our path to a successful future. It takes us all working together.

I wanted to share this update with our campus community so you, too, are aware of the support for us and our goals. But don't just take it from me, read what Kansas Board of Regents Chairman Jon Rolph and ESU Alum and Speaker of the House Dan Hawkins had to say:

**Op-ed from Kansas Board of Regents Chair Jon Rolph**

**Submitted February 3 to KVOE, The Emporia Gazette + The Bulletin**

"There is no doubt that Higher Education will look different ten years from now than it does today. Many factors have contributed to changing the economics both for universities and for students. We have recently faced these new realities head-on at Emporia State through an extensive and at times painful restructuring.

"In line with national trends, on-campus enrollment at Emporia State has been declining for eighteen years resulting in budget-cutting every year. This negatively impacts long-term strategies and limits our opportunities to create a bright future for our state's first public university.

"The Emporia community and Emporia State's futures are intertwined in meaningful ways. In fact, a strong and vibrant Emporia State will contribute purposefully to the future economic opportunities and quality of life for Emporians and surrounding communities. It is imperative for Emporia, Emporia State, and for Kansas that we allocate our efforts and resources toward deliberate, well-considered strategies that will make this relationship as prosperous as possible for the greatest number of people.

"Earlier this month, my duties as Chairman of the Kansas Board of Regents afforded me the opportunity to spend some time with the expanded leadership team now guiding Emporia State's future. There were Deans, Administrators, Faculty, Students, Staff, and Foundation representatives around the table. I was encouraged by the resolve and energy that I perceived in their comments and saw in their eyes. It will take uncommon determination, optimism, and broad support to get us there.

"As we turn the corner into a new year and a new semester, I encourage every member of

the Emporia community to participate in this transformation by contributing your abilities and strengths wherever and whenever you can. You have a committed group of servant leaders who are leading transformational change and need your support, encouragement, and partnership."

### **Proud Hornet- The Emporia State Model**

February 4, 2023 – Dan Hawkins Newsletter

"This week I was visited by leadership from my alma mater, Emporia State University. A little over a year ago, ESU began taking a hard look at all aspects of their institution in order to change with the needs of today's students. Regional universities like ESU are critical to the economic prosperity of their communities, especially here in Kansas, but the landscape of higher Education is changing. Enrollments in four-year institutions, particularly regional institutions, has been declining for years and research shows that students and their families are looking for a clear connection to a career after earning a degree. I could not be more proud that my alma mater is leading the charge to transform ESU for success long into the future.

"Emporia State has focused on investing in and growing, programs that students, and the employers who hire them, want and need. They conducted a complete assessment of their institution, identified inefficiencies and made choices about how to spend their resources in a way that would create the best return for the most students, Kansas businesses, and taxpayers. They moved away from trying to be all things to all people and instead prioritized their resources on programs that Kansas businesses need most- areas like teaching, nursing & health sciences, business, and technology & cybersecurity.

"ESU is committed to being more efficient in how they run their college and that's a goal I can get behind! As legislators, working with our higher ed institutions to deliver the best value to their students and grads will go a long way toward building up a robust worker pool, something I hear from across all industries that they are in desperate need of! Emporia State University has right-sized for stability and to be the best they can be for the students and the needs of Kansas. And as an ESU alumni, that makes me really proud to see. We talk a lot about growing our workforce. It's part of the Republican Better Way plan. I truly believe the ESU model, is a path forward to do just that."

We will continue to invest in ourselves so we can deliver the very best to our students who deserve nothing less. Thank you for being part of Hornet Nation and for all that you do for ESU!

With ESU Pride,



Ken Hush  
President

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