

A woman with curly hair and glasses, wearing a blue blazer, is passing a blue baton to another person whose back is to the camera. They are on a red running track with white lane markings. In the background, there are trees and a building under a clear sky.

CROSSROADS

PASSING THE BATON

REV. DR. SHANNON DYCUS LEADS EMU'S NEXT CHAPTER

Crossroads (USPS 174-860) is published once a year by Eastern Mennonite University for distribution to 14,000 alumni, students, parents and friends.

A leader among faith-based universities, **Eastern Mennonite University** values academic excellence, peace and justice, and an active faith as a community of learning. Founded in 1917, in Harrisonburg, Virginia, EMU offers undergraduate, graduate and seminary degrees that prepare students to serve and lead in a global context.

EMU's mission statement is posted in its entirety at: emu.edu/president/mission

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MANUEL NUÑEZ '94, CHAIR / Collegeville, Pa.
JAKE BELL / Harrisonburg, Va.
GLORIA DIENER '76 / Harrisonburg, Va.
JAMES DILLER / Poolesville, Md.
LOUISE OTTO HOSTETTER '79 / Harrisonburg, Va.
JESS KING '96 / Lancaster, Pa.
MATHEW KOSHY / San Mateo, Calif.
BENY KRISBIANTO, MDIV '15 / Philadelphia, Pa.
STEPHEN KRISS '94 / Philadelphia, Pa.
JANET LIND / Strasburg, Pa.
MARGIE MEJIA-CARABALLO '84 / Rock Island, Ill.
GORDON MERIWETHER MA '14, MDIV '15 / Harrisonburg, Va.
RAL OBIOHA '08 / Houston, Texas
JANE HOOBER PEIFER '74, MDIV '97 / Harrisonburg, Va.
GLENNA RAMER '77 / Graysville, Tenn.
JAMES ROSENBERGER '68 / State College, Pa.
SUSAN TAYLOR / Louisville, Ky.
BRUCE THOMAS '85 / Telford, Pa.

CROSSROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SHANNON DYCUS / President
KIRK L. SHISLER '81 / VP for advancement
BRAYDON HOOVER '11, MA '21 / VP for enrollment

STAFF

JEN KULJU / Editor
RYAN CORNELL / Writer
JON STYER '07 / Designer
DAVID PULGAR / Alumni awards writer

All EMU personnel can be reached during regular business hours. Call 540-432-4000 or visit emu.edu for contact details.

POSTMASTER: Submit address changes to:
Crossroads

Eastern Mennonite University
 1200 Park Road
 Harrisonburg VA 22802



FROM THE PRESIDENT

REFLECTING ON NINE YEARS OF SERVICE

SUSAN SCHULTZ HUXMAN



What an honor it's been to serve EMU as its ninth president for nine years. And what a remarkable year we experienced—from confronting financial realities to celebrating significant enrollment gains projected for this fall, new fundraising records, and a reimagined learning environment. Along the way, we dedicated a new track and field complex and enjoyed national attention for our first Rhodes scholar, Meredith Lehman '25, and a “Best Colleges in America” rating from Money.com.

I've learned many things from stewarding EMU through the past nine years. **I have learned you can never say “thank you” too many times.** So, thank you to all board members. Thank you to all executive leadership team members, president's cabinet members, and faculty, staff, and students who have kept EMU missionally aligned and focused on the future.

Thank you to our generous supporters who have invested in EMU. Without them, we could not open pathways of access to more students. Thank you for allowing me to “tend the vine” for this time.

And now a new glorious season of tending to students has arrived! I invite your prayers and joyous support for EMU's new interim president, the Rev. Dr. Shannon Dycus.

A SEASON OF TRANSFORMATION

SHANNON W. DYCUS



Just as Susan concludes her leadership with a chorus of “thank yous,” I also begin with gratitude. It is an honor to step into leadership at EMU where I am surrounded by a rich legacy, committed alumni and community partners, dedicated faculty and staff, and engaged students. These are the building blocks of a strong university and provide us with the resources and hope to begin this new season. Thank you.

Since 1917, it has always been central to educate leaders who listen to one another and the voice of God to influence the communities around them. Our values—academic excellence, peace and justice, active faith—have been persistent. Because of these values, we have never believed that education is simply about transferring knowledge from one mind to another. We believe, deeply, that education is about transformation—for our students, for our communities, and for the world. This season of EMU is one of transformation for us—carrying those same values into changing technologies, shifting career demands, and fragile politics. In these stories, you will see an EMU that is boldly preparing to continue our rich commitments and shape leaders who carry hope into a changing landscape. Join us, in mission and in hope.

IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURES

12

EMU VALUES REFRESH

EMU lives into its revised values of academic excellence, peace and justice, and active faith.

14

EMU LANCASTER AVIATION PROGRAM

Meet the new director of aviation.

16

NEW NAME, SAME GREAT PROGRAM

Rebranded EMU Washington Semester celebrates 50 years of career-building and community.

18

PICKLEBALL FINDS HOME AT EMU

Local groups and donors partner to fund new pickleball and tennis courts.

35

ALUMNI AWARDS

Hear from honorees Jess King '96, Fabrice Guerrier MA '15, and Brittany Caine-Conley '14.

ON THE COVER

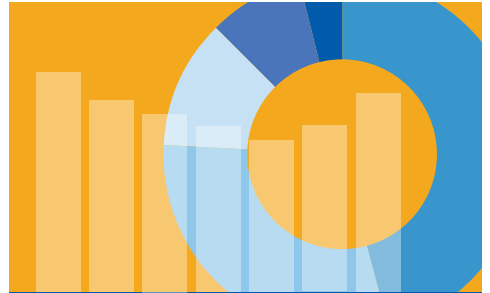
Rev. Dr. Shannon W. Dycus, who began her position as EMU's interim president on July 1, 2025, receives the baton from President Emerita Dr. Susan Schultz Huxman on the new campus track complex.

PHOTO BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17



8

REIMAGINING EMU



10

ANNUAL REPORT



19

PASSING THE BATON: A PRESIDENTIAL PURPOSE

ROYAL FILES

2 COMMENCEMENT

6 LEAD TOGETHER

23 MILEPOSTS

4 ON CAMPUS

7 LEGACY SPOTLIGHT

40

HOMECOMING 2025

Plan your visit to campus
Oct. 10-12!



COMMENCEMENT

2025

Graduates and their families gathered on the Front Lawn for EMU's 107th Commencement ceremony in May. An estimated 3,000 guests attended the event.

PHOTOS BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17/EMU
AND CALEB SCHLABACH '16





Eastern Mennonite University awarded 320 degrees at its 107th annual Commencement on Sunday, May 4, 2025. The total included 188 undergraduate degrees, 70 master's degrees, and 62 graduate certificates. Among those were 13 students who received either a degree or certificate from the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding and five students who received either a degree or certificate from Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

EMU at Lancaster held its commencement ceremony on Friday, May 9, 2025, at Forest Hills Mennonite Church in Leola, Pennsylvania.

PHOTO BY CHRISTY KAUFFMAN

ON CAMPUS

THE ARTS

1. The EMU Chamber Singers, directed by **Dr. Benjamin Bergey**, performed the program “Hope and Unity” at 10 concerts during its spring break tour from March 1-6 in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Stops included four high schools (two in each state); The Music Hall in Orange, Virginia, for a concert with The Rapidan Orchestra; the retirement community Landis Homes in Lancaster County for a concert with the Lancaster Mennonite High School choir; and four churches in southeastern Pennsylvania—including Souderton Mennonite Church for a concert with the Dock Mennonite Academy choir, and Nations Worship Center, an Indonesian Mennonite church in Philadelphia led by Pastor **Beny Krisbianto MDiv '15**.

2. EMU Theatre brought Rick Riordan's 2005 *New York Times* bestselling novel—the first book in the “Percy Jackson & the Olympians” series—to life in “The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical” from Oct. 11-13 and Oct. 25-27 in EMU's Studio Theater. Performed by a cast of 11 students and community members, this immersive production featured an electrifying score backed by a live rock band, sword-fighting, and larger-than-life puppetry. The mythical spectacle was directed by former EMU Theatre program director **Justin Poole**.

3. **Jerry Holsopple**, professor of Visual and Communication Arts (VACA) at EMU for over 25 years, biked 1,118 miles over 22 days along the coasts of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 2023. Photos and journal entries from this ride were featured in his final faculty exhibition, “Finding Water,” on display from Feb. 21-March 21 in EMU's Margaret Martin Gehman Gallery. The trek followed Holsopple's ninth intercultural trip leading students to the Baltics; the exhibition reflected on the friendships formed and memories made over the years.

4. A brand-new, state-of-the-art recording studio opened inside Astral Hall on EMU Hill in fall 2025. The studio features two isolation rooms and a Dolby Atmos control room for mixing immersive or 3D audio. Campus and community members can use the space to produce full records, music videos, and informational and instructional videos. Built in 1955, the former lecture hall was once home to the astronomy society. Starting in the early '70s, it housed the WEMC radio station run by EMU students and staff.



PHOTO BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17



PHOTO BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17



PHOTO BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17



PHOTO BY ZACK FUHR '25



PHOTO BY KARISSA SAUDER '10 / @IN.OLD.CITIES

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

CHAMBER SINGERS REP NORTH AMERICA AT 500-YEAR CELEBRATION

THE EMU CHAMBER SINGERS

spread a message of hope and unity on the global stage as the choir toured Europe earlier this summer, singing at historic venues in the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland before capping off its tour with a series of performances at the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism celebration in Zürich on May 29.

The auditioned touring chamber choir was one of five ensembles chosen from around the world—joining groups from Indonesia, Kenya, Paraguay, and Switzerland—to perform songs at the event, *The Courage to Love: Anabaptism@500*, hosted by Mennonite World Conference. About 3,500 Anabaptists gathered in Zürich for the celebration, including about 1,200 worshippers who filled the Grossmünster church for the service, while many tens of



thousands more watched the event live online.

The 24 members of the Chamber Singers performed nine full concerts, two church services, and several impromptu outdoor gigs along their 2½-week European tour. In addition to their singing, the group's EMU students and alumni visited museums, joined walking tours and history lectures, and explored Anabaptist heritage sites, a concentration camp, and the Anne Frank House.

Chamber Singers Director **Dr. Benjamin Bergey '11** said the choir performed for large crowds at nearly every concert and left a visible impact on many audience members through the quality of their singing and the poignancy of their message of hope and unity. "Several pieces moved dozens of people to tears, including 'Prayer of the Children' and 'Ukuthula,'" he said. "Many audience members came up afterward to share how much hope it gave them to see so many young people so deeply invested in both the music and the message."

Members of the Chamber Singers said their transformative experiences on the tour deepened their faith and strengthened their commitment to peace and justice. In Zürich, they shared meals with singers from around the world and traveled by bus and rehearsed together. "It was a wonderful intercultural experience," Bergey said.

For **Emma Nord '25**, an alto from Greenville, Illinois, one particularly memorable moment during the 500-year celebration came while witnessing Anabaptist and Reformed Church leaders wash each other's feet at the service. "Their humility and desire for reconciliation was beautiful," she said. "It was the experience of a lifetime, for sure."

Joshua Stucky, a rising senior from Princeton, New Jersey, who sings bass in the Chamber Singers, also toured Europe with the choir in May 2023. But he said the music on this most recent trip resonated even more deeply with audiences. "I think our message of hope and unity crosses language barriers," he said. "It carries so much weight right now."

LEAD TOGETHER

EMU WELCOMES NEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS

Three new trustees, Jake Bell, Jess King '96, and Bruce Thomas '85, began their terms on July 1, 2025.



JAKE BELL serves as president and CEO of Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community (VMRC) in Harrisonburg. As a seasoned executive leader with more than 20 years of experience in faith-based senior living, his expertise is in leading strategic change, preserving organizational missions, and expanding service offerings.

Prior to VMRC, Bell served as president and CEO of Christian Horizons, a faith-based senior living organization with eleven locations across four states. He also served as chief operating officer for Lutheran Senior Services and as president and CEO of Catholic Health East Trinity Health.

Jake holds bachelor's and master's degrees in zoology from Southeastern Oklahoma State University and Oklahoma State University, respectively. He also earned an MS in administration of long-term care and retirement facilities from the University of North Texas.



JESS KING '96 has spent her career as a leader and social entrepreneur in the civic sector. She serves as the founding executive director of the Steinman Institute for Civic Engagement, a Lancaster, Pennsylvania-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting local journalism and boosting the community's relationship with news media.

Her prior experience includes working as the chief of staff for the City of Lancaster; serving as executive director of ASSETS Lancaster, an organization that helps people achieve better lives through entrepreneurship; and leading economic development in Pittsburgh.

King earned a bachelor's degree in liberal arts from Eastern Mennonite University and an MBA from Bard College. She and her husband, Chad, have two daughters.



BRUCE THOMAS '85 is a CPA and shareholder at the accounting firm Detweiler, Hershey & Associates in Souderton, Pennsylvania. He has extensive experience in tax and financial statement compliance, quality control, and business consulting, serving individuals, family-owned businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

Thomas earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from EMU. He has held leadership and committee roles on several nonprofit boards, both church-related and community-based.

He and his wife, Joy, are members of Blooming Glen Mennonite Church. They have two adult children, **Ryan '17** and **Anika '19**.

OUTGOING TRUSTEES INCLUDE DIANN BAILEY, LIZA HEAVENER '07, JB MILLER '70, CEDRIC MOORE '97, AND RAJARSHI ROY, WHOM WE THANK FOR THEIR SERVICE.

A LIST OF THE FULL MEMBERSHIP IS LOCATED ON THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE WEBPAGE AT: EMU.EDU/PRESIDENT/TRUSTEES

LEGACY SPOTLIGHT

SCHOLARSHIPS FUEL STUDENT SUCCESS

Legacy gifts from two donors are investing in EMU's future by supporting student scholarships. Generous donors like them helped EMU reach its second-best fundraising year on record in 2024-2025.

J. LEONARD "LEN"

HARTMAN, who became an instrument-rated pilot in 1959 and managed a small airfield east of Charlottesville in the 1960s, is helping future aviators at EMU take flight through the **J. Leonard "Len" Hartman Scholarship for Aviation**.

The scholarship will provide \$16,000 annually, starting in fall 2025, for aviation students at EMU at Lancaster who demonstrate financial need.

A native of Albemarle County, Virginia, Hartman worked for the C&O Railroad, raised cattle, and managed a number of rental properties. A Marine Corps veteran and lifetime member of the American Legion, he served on the honor guard at many funerals. A "skilled pilot," he delighted in taking his family on flights around Albemarle County in his 1966 Cessna 172, landing with barely a thump, recalled his friend and legal advisor, Marshall Yoder. In his 90s, Hartman flew less often and spoke with Yoder about parting with his plane. When Yoder told him about the rapidly growing aviation program at EMU at Lancaster and the impact his plane could have on the next generation of pilots, Hartman bequeathed the Cessna—along with 25 percent of his estate—to EMU upon his death in February 2022.

"Len knew there was a worldwide shortage of pilots and that there would always be people interested in flight. To honor his memory, we decided to create a scholarship named after him," said **Braydon Hoover '11, MAOL '21**, vice president for enrollment. Hoover worked with Hartman and Yoder while in EMU's Advancement office to establish the endowment, which totals \$345,000, including \$20,000 from the sale of the Cessna. "It has quickly become one of the larger named endowed scholarships for one of the fastest-growing programs at EMU," Hoover said.

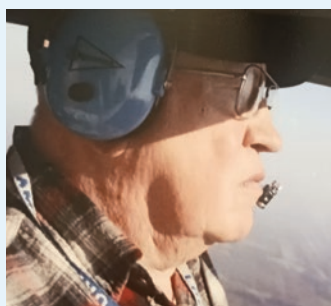


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELA LOESER.

DR. MARGARET MARTIN GEHMAN '42

may be best known as the namesake of EMU's campus art gallery, but her deeper legacy is one of generosity and selfless service to others. Gehman, who taught art and physical education at EMU from 1944 until

her retirement in 1987, established the **Margaret Martin Gehman Endowed Scholarship Fund** as well as program endowments for athletics, the humanities, and special buildings on campus. In 2005, she received the inaugural Margaret Martin Gehman Philanthropist of the Year award. She died in August 2019 at age 97.

Six years after her passing, a \$400,000 gift from her estate increased her scholarship fund—which provides general financial aid for students—to more than \$500,000. The fund is expected to generate approximately \$25,000 annually in direct financial aid, benefiting at least five students each year. The gift "puts an exclamation point on her many decades of support" and brings her total contributions to EMU to just under \$2 million, said **Kirk Shisler '81**, vice president for advancement. In 2010, she donated her 1967 blue Volkswagen Beetle to support student scholarships, saying, "EMU has been good to me over the years."

Gehman was affectionately known as "Speedy" for her energy, athleticism, and swiftness. Some also knew her as "Saint Margaret" for her love of lending money to people and organizations in need. The fleet-footed philanthropist was a trailblazer. She completed a two-year degree in 1942 and went on to become one of the first women graduates of EMU to earn a doctorate, receiving hers in art education from George Peabody College for Teachers (now part of Vanderbilt University) in 1962. After retiring, she taught a watercolor class at EMU and regularly volunteered on campus. "The Lord blessed me with the ability to serve and the opportunity to share with others," she once said.



EMU FILE PHOTO

REIMAGINING EMU

University adapts to meet new challenges

SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGES

AND UNIVERSITIES face daunting challenges in today's ever-evolving world of higher education.

The demographic cliff—a drop-off in the number of high school seniors—is resulting in fewer applicants and lower enrollments. Rising costs, coupled with shrinking revenues from those lower enrollments and modest endowment sizes, are forcing many schools to close their doors. And a growing skepticism about the return on investment of a private college education is leading more prospective students to turn elsewhere.

Some of those students are flocking to alternatives to the traditional four-year college degree, opting instead for trade schools—where enrollment has surged since the pandemic—or on-the-job training programs right out of high school. Others are taking advantage of the flexibility and accessibility offered through online programs and earning a degree without stepping foot on a campus. Still, many prospective students are forgoing higher education altogether, and in droves. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the proportion of high school graduates going straight to college has fallen from a peak of 70% in 2016 to 62% in 2022 (the most recent year on file).

For students still planning to go to college, the larger and more popular schools offer a sense of security—a promise that their investment will pay off. In a crowded and hypercompetitive market, it's often the name on the diploma that speaks the loudest. “As a result, every private college needs to adapt, not just to survive, but to better serve the needs of its students and society,” said **Braydon Hoover '11, MAOL '21**, vice

president for enrollment.

In response to these looming existential threats, EMU is taking bold steps to ensure its mission and community thrive for generations to come. University leaders have spent the past year strategically planning a path forward, known as Reimagining EMU, that directly addresses these challenges and sets a vision for the future. That plan includes steps to optimize the school's resources, reconfigure its academic structure, increase brand awareness, and invest in innovative solutions that differentiate the university and its students.

A CURRICULUM THAT COUNTS

One of the most exciting developments to emerge from the Reimagining EMU process is the new pathways curriculum projected to roll out beginning in the Fall 2026 semester. This innovative, interdisciplinary framework repackages EMU's general education/core curriculum into four focused pathways, each aligned with university values. These pathways are both transcriptable and translatable, designed to clearly communicate relevant skills to employers.

The pathways curriculum promotes the university's strengths and values while helping students develop in-demand soft skills that enhance their career readiness in a competitive job market. Students will likely select a pathway in the second semester of their first year, with guidance provided to help them choose the option that best fits their goals.

“This new model can be tailored to each student's unique abilities and interests, adapts to a variety of careers, and ensures their general education credits truly count, all at no additional

time or cost to them,” said **Dr. Tynisha Willingham**, provost and vice president of academic affairs.

DIVISIONS AND DEANS

Another way that EMU is positioning itself to better serve its students and fulfill its mission is by reconfiguring its academic structure from three schools to two divisions. The new leadership structure will help the university work more efficiently and encourage greater integration and collaboration across academic programs.

Two deans with extensive leadership and grant management experience have been appointed to lead the academic divisions, with both officially beginning their roles on July 1, 2025. The **Rev. Dr. Sarah Ann Bixler '02**, former associate dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, serves as dean for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences division. **Dr. Michael Horst '12, MAC '14**, former interim associate dean, former director of EMU's counseling program, and current director of its psychology program, serves as dean for the Health, Behavioral, and Natural Sciences division. The two divisional deans work closely with **Dr. Tara Kishbaugh**, inaugural dean of faculty and student success, and **Jonathan Swartz MA '14 (conflict transformation and MDiv)**, dean of students, while reporting to the provost.

“These appointments mark an important step in EMU's reorganization and will help the university better serve students and live out its mission,” said Willingham. “We feel invigorated by having leaders of this caliber stepping





PHOTOS BY MACSON
MCGUIGAN '17

into these roles. Each brings a deep commitment to student success, faculty development, and collaborative leadership as we fully embrace and live into this new structure.”

STREAMLINED FOR STUDENTS

As part of the reimagining process, EMU is focusing on what it does best while adapting to the changing needs of today’s students. Over the past year, faculty and staff worked together to streamline course offerings, making them easier to navigate and more clearly connected to career outcomes, without losing the unique character of the EMU experience.

That includes phasing out programs with little to no current enrollment, few graduates in recent years, and limited interest from prospective students. Beginning in fall 2025, the university will no longer offer chemistry, economics, history, health and physical education, or writing studies as standalone majors. Students will still be able to engage with the values and ideas of these disciplines through minors and as part of the new pathways curriculum. Additionally, EMU is introducing a criminology major (designed around the principles of restorative justice) and a finance minor to better align with student interest and career opportunities.

“These majors reflect growing interest

from prospective students and respond to workforce needs both locally and nationally, while staying rooted in our mission as a peace and justice university,” Willingham said.

TURNING THE CORNER

Hope is already shining brightly at EMU. Alumni, friends, and donors are showing their strong support for EMU, giving at record levels. This year’s LovEMU Giving Day brought in a record-breaking \$365,313, helping make the most recent fiscal year the university’s second-highest fundraising year in the past three decades. The university has already raised more than 60% of its \$40 million goal for *Forward Together: Preparing Tomorrow’s Unifying Leaders (2023-2028)*, the largest fundraising campaign in EMU’s history.

Another source of optimism on campus comes from EMU’s dedicated admissions team and the early enrollment numbers for the incoming Class of 2029. As of the writing of this article, net tuition deposits for incoming students are up 11% over last year and first-year deposits are 2% higher than the year before.

“This encouraging momentum is a testament not only to the hard work and heart of our enrollment team, but also to

the collective efforts of faculty, staff, and the entire EMU community,” Hoover said. “Their dedication to building relationships, telling EMU’s story with integrity, and walking alongside students in their discernment is making a difference. We’re seeing stronger engagement and deeper alignment between who we are and who we’re meant to serve, and that gives me great hope for EMU’s future.”

NEW LEADERSHIP

As the **Rev. Dr. Shannon W. Dycus** settles into her role as interim president, she is focused on continuing the reimagining process to guide the university toward sustained success. Dycus, who took office on July 1, 2025, succeeds President Emerita **Dr. Susan Schultz Huxman**, who announced last fall she would be retiring after nine years as EMU’s ninth president. Dycus has led student affairs at EMU since 2019 (*read all about her journey to the President’s Office starting on Page 19*) and brings a deep passion for the campus community and its students. “We will continue to reimagine what EMU looks like and who it serves, in ways that are both surprising and exciting,” she said.

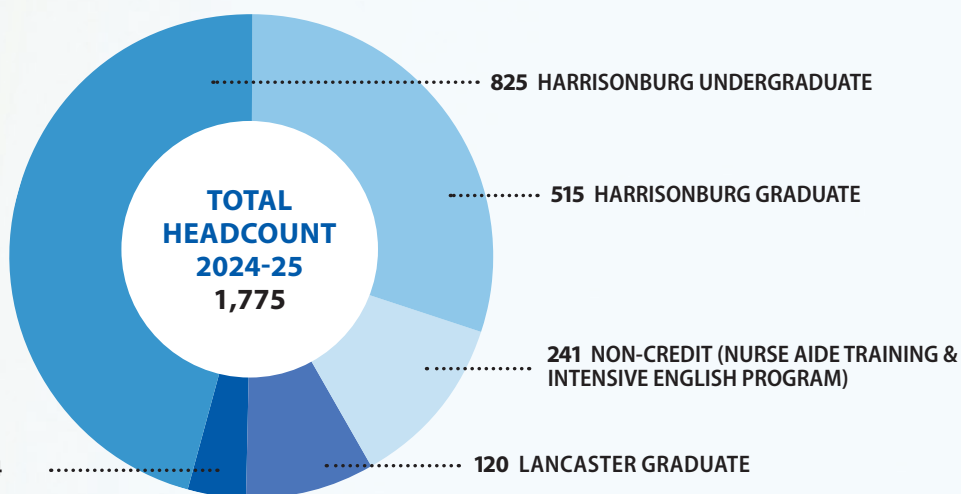
ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25*

ENROLLMENT

12-MONTH ENROLLMENT

12-month unduplicated enrollment captures the total number of students who take classes at EMU during a 12-month period. It is a more comprehensive picture of the university's activities than the traditional fall enrollment statistics.



TOP PROGRAMS OF STUDY – UNDERGRAD

#1 BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

#2 NURSING

#3 BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

#4 TEACHER EDUCATION

#5 PSYCHOLOGY



TOP PROGRAMS OF STUDY – GRADUATE

#1 TEACHER EDUCATION

#2 JUSTICE AND PEACEBUILDING

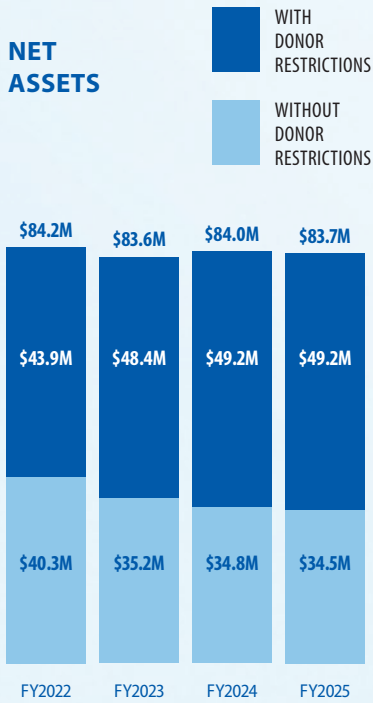
#3 SEMINARY

#4 NURSING

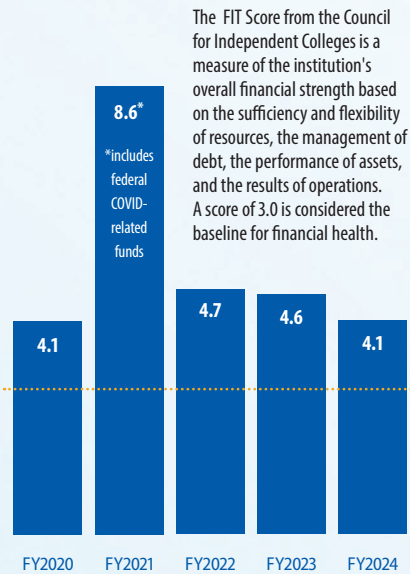
#5 COUNSELING

FINANCIALS

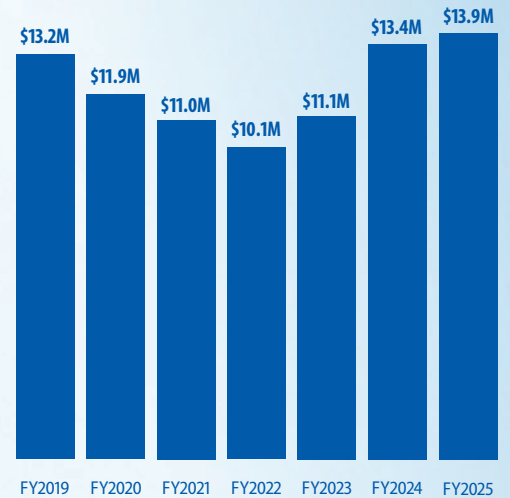
NET ASSETS



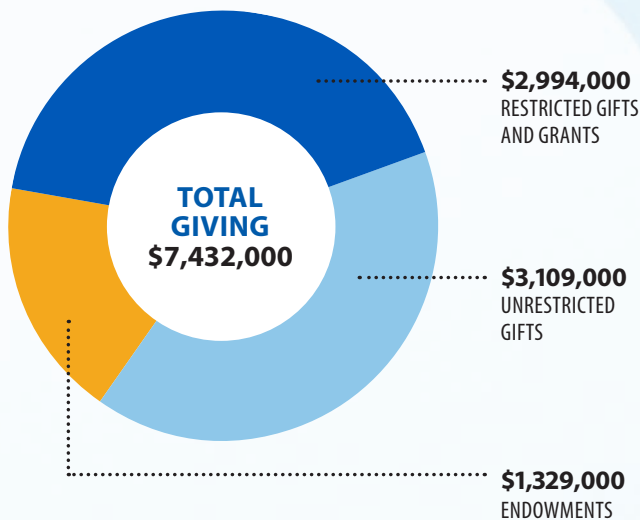
OVERALL FINANCIAL STRENGTH SCORE



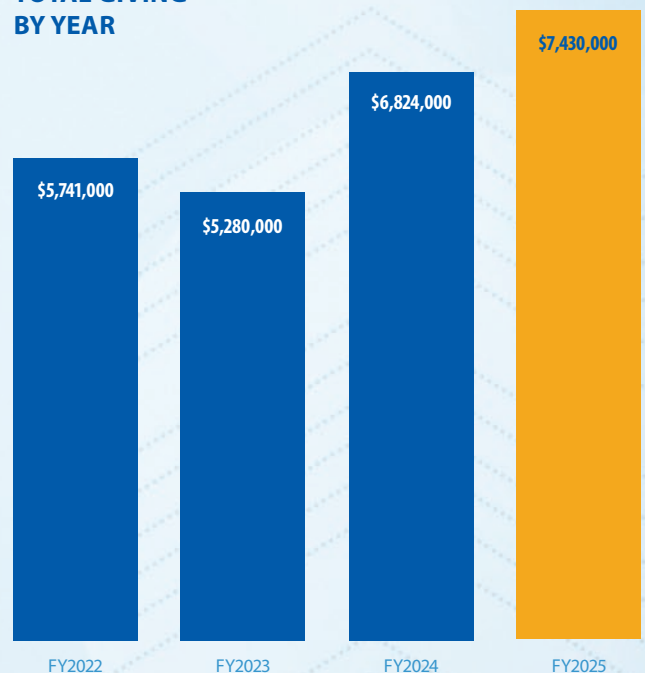
LONG-TERM DEBT



OVERALL CONTRIBUTIONS



TOTAL GIVING BY YEAR



*2024-25 FISCAL YEAR FIGURES HAVE YET TO BE AUDITED.

EMU VALUES REFRESH

EMU IS LIVING INTO ITS REVISED VALUES

of academic excellence, peace and justice, and active faith after a six-month process to review and refresh its values statement.

The process began in January 2024 with discussions about the scope of the review and revision, an audit of several peer schools' value statements, conversations with the Executive Leadership Team about essential components, and drafting of a test revision. Approximately 40 students and 100 faculty and staff members participated in 14 focus group sessions, which included three student meetings, nine faculty and staff meetings, and two Board of Trustees committee meetings. Feedback from the focus groups was gathered and analyzed and used to create a final revision. The Board of Trustees approved the new statement at its June 2024 meeting.

The goal of the process, outlined in the 2023-2028 *Pathways of Promise* strategic plan, was to create clarity and consistency in EMU's values—and to connect it more seamlessly with the university vision statement, which frames the strategic plan.

EMU's previous values statement read: "EMU's mission and vision are grounded in the enduring biblical values of Christian discipleship, community, service, and peace." EMU's vision statement reads: "We will open new pathways of access and achievement for all students who aspire to grow as unifying leaders equipped with intercultural competence, oriented toward peace and justice, and rooted in an active faith modeled on the life and teachings of Jesus."

During the 2024-2025 school year, EMU began a brand campaign to amplify the university's value proposition by communicating its revised values across broadcast, outdoor, print and digital platforms.

REVISED VALUES STATEMENT

We, the community of learners—students, faculty and staff—of Eastern Mennonite University value:



As a teaching university, we prioritize student learning. Our approach to teaching and learning is equitable and engaged as we seek to inspire curiosity, creativity and academic achievement.



As a leader in peacebuilding, conflict transformation and restorative justice, we pursue peace by teaching and practicing intercultural understanding, justice and equity, and environmental sustainability. We value diversity and seek to form unifying, inclusive leaders.



As a community, we seek to embody faith in action and serve and learn together to repair harm and restore hope. Shaped by Anabaptist-Mennonite beliefs and practices and the life and teachings of Jesus, we practice compassion, mutual love, and appreciation for the diversity of religious and cultural expressions represented in our community.



PHOTO BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17

LEHMAN '25 WINS COVETED RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

Meredith Lehman '25, a biology and political science double major, became the first Rhodes Scholar from EMU when recipients were announced last fall. The Dover, Ohio, native was one of 32 students in the U.S. selected from nearly 3,000 applicants to receive the 2025 Rhodes Scholarship. The award is considered the most prized international scholarship for American college graduates and covers all expenses to study at the University of Oxford in England. Award criteria include exceptional academic achievement, integrity of character, respect for others, and demonstrated leadership ability. Lehman served as president of EMU's Student Government Association and Young Democrats Club. She has an extensive record of scientific publications, and her research on drug delivery systems for anticancer drugs has been funded by the National Science Foundation. "This amazing opportunity is truly a product of the EMU community and all of its incredible people," said Lehman, who plans to pursue a master of philosophy in international relations at Oxford. "The faculty and staff have empowered me to pursue knowledge and critical thinking, while also encouraging empathy and compassion." During the 2022-23 school year, Lehman served as the student representative on the President's Cabinet. President Emerita **Dr. Susan Schultz Huxman** noted Lehman's leadership in grant fundraising, co-designing an honors course on sustainable fashion, and volunteering to provide legal services for asylum seekers. "Meredith has been a voice for equity, peace, and justice in Harrisonburg, in Washington, D.C., and in her hometown," Huxman said.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY

The Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship (ICPF) conference returned to EMU from Feb. 21-23 at the Seminary Building. Hosted by the student-run EMU Peace Fellowship club, the 2025 ICPF conference brought together 110 attendees from the Harrisonburg community, area higher ed institutions, and students and faculty from Mennonite, Brethren, and Quaker colleges across the United States to examine issues of peace and justice. Centered around the theme "Building Solidarity: From Turtle Island to Palestine," the conference featured speakers and workshops from Mennonite Action and the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery—organizations working to build Palestine and Indigenous solidarities, respectively. The annual conference has been rotating between participating institutions since 1953; EMU last hosted in 2020 before COVID caused a five-year hiatus.



PHOTOS BY MICAH MAST

DIGGING A NEW PATH

Several EMU students spent Spring Break in Comer, Georgia, for a Y-Serve service-learning trip at Jubilee Partners, an intentional Christian community that offers hospitality to refugees and other immigrants. Students helped to mulch blueberry bushes, plant chestnut trees, dig a new path, and cut out invasive shrubs in the woods. They also got to explore the 260-acre property, with its fields, forest, river, and even a small waterfall. In the evenings, they played card games with partners and volunteers who live at Jubilee. Junior **Micah Mast**, student leader of the group, was a young child when his family volunteered at Jubilee and wanted to "go back and help out." **Erin Loker**, a first-year student and Y-Serve leadership team member, says the trip taught her about simple living. "It helped me reflect on how much I have that I don't need and what's important to me."



From left: Sophomore Dylan Diener, Noah Yoder, junior Micah Mast and first-year students Shawna Hurst, Erin Loker and Ella Richer.

EMU AT LANCASTER

New Director of Aviation



Derek J. Kline is EMU's new director of aviation.

EMU HAS WELCOMED DEREK J. KLINE as its new director of aviation. With over 13,800 total flight hours and extensive leadership experience in the aviation industry, Kline brings a wealth of expertise to EMU's growing aviation program. He began his role on April 1.

Kline's distinguished career spans over two decades, including service as captain and first officer at both American Airlines and Piedmont Airlines where he operated domestic and international flights under Part 121 Air Carrier operations. His experience encompasses multi-engine, turbine, and jet aircraft, with DHC-8, B-757, ERJ-170 and ERJ-190 type ratings.

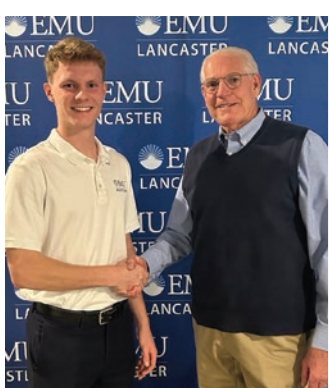
In addition to his extensive flight experience, Kline has served as a flight instructor, chief pilot and ground instructor, ensuring the highest standards in pilot training and safety through curriculum development and pilot performance evaluations. A Central Missouri State University graduate, Kline holds a bachelor of science degree in aviation management.

EMU Provost **Dr. Tynisha Willingham** said that under Kline's leadership, EMU's aviation program "will continue to grow and provide top-tier education for aspiring pilots." Kline said he was "drawn to the incredible growth of the program and the unwavering commitment to providing students with the knowledge to excel in aviation."

EMU's aviation program has soared since launching in 2018 with five students. The addition of 24 new students in fall 2025 brings enrollment to 49. A total of 24 students have graduated across four cohorts. High demand for the program led to a waitlist for the 2025 cohort.

EMU offers a bachelor's degree in Leadership and Organizational Management (LOM) with a concentration in aviation focusing on professional flight training. In partnership with Aero-Tech Services, Inc., EMU provides a comprehensive pathway for pilot education that equips students with exceptional training and career opportunities in commercial aviation and private charter operations.

As a Part 141 collegiate aviation program, EMU has a reduced requirement for the Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate, allowing graduates to qualify for the ATP with just 1,000 flight hours. Students earn their Private, Instrument, and Commercial certificates, including a multi-engine rating and their Instructor Certificates.



In November, David Koval was awarded the \$5,000 Robert J. Rummel Scholarship, designated for third-year LOM students with an aviation concentration. Named for corporate pilot Robert Rummel (pictured with Koval on left), it recognizes dedication and excellence in the field of aviation.

COURTESY PHOTOS



PHOTO BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17

DRONE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

A new Drone Certification Program at EMU will equip participants with the skills they need for safe and innovative operations. Offered at both the Lancaster and Harrisonburg campuses through EMU's Continuing and Professional Education, the 20-hour noncredit program prepares those seeking a pathway to commercial drone piloting for the remote pilot certificate. Also known as the FAA Part 107 certificate, it is required by the U.S. government for anyone operating a drone for commercial or non-recreational purposes.

In preparation for the exam, participants will learn about drone regulations, the National Airspace System, and weather and preflight planning. During the final four hours of the course, they will gain hands-on experience piloting a drone. Participants may schedule the exam at a designated testing center, with locations available in Lancaster and Charlottesville.

John Sibole, who has over 50 years of professional aviation experience, including service as an FAA inspector, will teach the in-person courses where "you actually get to fly a drone," differentiating it from online courses.

Weekend-long courses were offered at both Lancaster and Harrisonburg in spring 2025. For the latest course information and to register, visit: emu.edu/graduate/drone

LONGENECKER CROWNED NATIONAL CHAMPION OF COLLEGE DISC GOLF

Jesse Longenecker, a first-year environmental science major on EMU's disc golf team, won the 2025 College Disc Golf National Championship in Division I singles this spring, besting the top collegiate players from across the U.S. and Canada.

The championship was held at the famed Winthrop University Disc Golf Course in Rock Hill, South Carolina, from April 2-5.

The Lancaster, Pennsylvania, native opened with an impressive nine-under-par 52 in the first round of 18 holes and finished strong, securing a three-stroke victory after the final nine. "It's a huge honor to win a national championship," he said. "This has been a dream I've had for a long time, ever since I decided I wanted to play college disc golf."

Longenecker is the grandson of **Charles Longenecker '57** and the son of **Lynn '94** and **Laurie Longenecker '94**. His sister, **Maria**, is a senior at EMU and his brother, **Nathan**, was a passionate and skilled disc golfer on the young EMU team, which started in 2019. Nathan was diagnosed with brain cancer during his first year at EMU and passed away eight months later in October 2021. His memory lives on through the nine-hole disc golf course on the EMU Hill named in his honor.



PHOTO BY PDGA

As a result of his first-place finish at nationals, Longenecker earned a bid to the 2025 U.S. Disc Golf Championship held at the Winthrop course from Oct. 9-12, where he will compete against the highest-rated professional players in the world.

Part of what makes him such a formidable opponent is his mental fortitude and ability to excel under pressure, said **Trevor Oyer '19**, coach of the EMU disc golf team. "He's a generational player," Oyer said. "He's one of the most talented players in the history of college disc golf."



COURTESY PHOTOS

Left: ML Lormejuste '25 (pictured in the gray EMU shirt) formed close friendships during his fall 2024 semester in DC. EMU's DC-based program has connected more than 1,000 students with internships, urban studies coursework, and shared community life since 1976. **Above:** The Nelson Good House located in the residential Brookland neighborhood of Washington, DC.

NEW NAME, SAME 'GREAT PROGRAM'

REBRANDED EMU WASHINGTON SEMESTER CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF CAREER-BUILDING AND COMMUNITY

WHEN ML LORMEJUSTE '25 arrived at the Washington Community Scholars' Center (WCSC) during the fall of 2024, he admits he wasn't there to make friends. "I was just there to do what I needed to do and move on," recalled the public health major. As the semester progressed, Lormejuste was nudged out of his comfort zone by social outings and group activities—and found himself forming close friendships with his eight housemates and discovering the value of community. Reflecting on that semester spent in Washington, DC, he said, "I love that group... They became a part of me."

Lormejuste is one of more than 1,000 students whose lives have been transformed through EMU's longest-running intercultural program, which is celebrating its 50th year of connecting students with internships, urban studies coursework, and shared community life. Launched in 1976, the program originally operated as the Washington Study-Service Year (WSSY) until 2002, when it was renamed Washington Com-



munity Scholars' Center (WCSC) as part of a shift from a yearlong format to three shorter terms per year.

These transitions have allowed the program to stay relevant and responsive. Program staff spent the past two years gathering input for a new name from its alumni, EMU students, and campus faculty and staff stakeholders. In April, the Provost's Council and President's Cabinet approved rebranding the program to the EMU Washington Semester.

The EMU Washington Semester offers fall and spring semester terms and a

10-week summer session. It remains the only urban studies program among Anabaptist-affiliated institutions and draws students from schools across the country, including Bethel College, Bluffton University, Goshen College, and Viterbo University.

LIVING, LEARNING, AND LAUNCHING CAREERS

Up to 15 students in the EMU Washington Semester share cooking responsibilities, manage a collective food budget, and work together to maintain their home at the Nelson Good House in the Brookland neighborhood of Northeast DC. Alumni over the past five decades point to their experiences in the program as a highlight of their college careers, if not their lives.

"I never realized what a great program this was. I learned valuable lessons in adulting, from navigating a large city to living in community," said **Meredith Lehman '25**, EMU's first Rhodes Scholar.

Like many students, her internship



EMU and Bethel College students make pizza together at the Nelson Good House.

paved the way to a future career opportunity. She interned at the Institute for Policy Studies this spring and returned to DC over the summer to work as a fellow at the progressive think tank. “Everyone should do this program, no matter their major,” said Lehman, who double majored in political science and biology.

Cynthia Lapp '86, a music education graduate and pastor at Hyattsville Menonite Church in Maryland, has benefited from the program in multiple ways. She was a student from 1983 to 1984, later served on staff for four years, and continues to support program interns at her church. Many of those interns have gone on to become pastors themselves.

Lapp said her internship at Elizabeth Seton High School opened the door to a teaching position after college. She added that the program is especially meaningful for students new to community living. “Surrounding ourselves with people from different cultures and backgrounds helps us see beyond the way we think and live, including how our decisions impact those around us.”

Some students find their perfect match through the program—not just professionally, but romantically. Alumnus **Micah Shristi '00**, an English

major who now works as director of International Student Services at EMU, met his wife, **Charlotte Gingerich Shristi**, a Goshen College alumna, while in the program from 1998 to 1999. Many of his housemates from that year are among his closest friends, including **Nathan Musselman '00**, who now lives next door.

“What’s wild is that there’s another couple from our year,” he said. **Jenelle Hershey '99** and **Keith Hoover '00** also got married after their time together in the program.”

A 'GOOD' START

In the fall of 1976, a scrappy academic program began immersing students in the cultured community of the nation’s capital. **Nelson Good '68**, who came to DC as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, founded and directed the program until his retirement in 1987.

The program, like the city around it, has seen plenty of changes. From the shift to three shorter terms and an accompanying name change in 2002 to a 2005 move from South Dakota Avenue to its current location on Taylor Street, the program has continued to evolve to meet the needs of its students and an



WSSY founder and inaugural director Nelson Good '68 rides a tractor at a rustic retreat center in West Virginia, where program students and staff go to escape city life.

ever-changing higher education landscape.

“The new name more clearly communicates the program as a university-run academic offering, is grounded in the context of our nation’s capital, and is easy to remember and say. It also aligns with common naming conventions used by other universities’ DC-based programs, making it more recognizable regionally and beyond,” said **Ryan Good**, EMU Washington Semester director and son of the late Nelson Good.

While evolving, the program has remained committed to supporting students’ personal and career development. Students consistently report leaving the program with improved professional confidence, greater clarity about career direction, more comfort in working with people who are different than they are, and increased awareness of systemic injustices, said Good.

“Dad would be thrilled to see the ways this program has evolved over the years. Though much has changed, the bones of the program he envisioned remain the same... supporting students as they make sense of who they are in a complex world, both personally and professionally.”

Two events will celebrate the program’s 50th anniversary: a reunion during Homecoming 2025 on Saturday, Oct. 11, from 1-3 p.m. in the Student Union, and a spring gathering at the Nelson Good House on Saturday, Feb. 21, from 10 a.m. to noon.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE EMU WASHINGTON SEMESTER, VISIT:
emu.edu/washington



NEW PICKLEBALL COURTS A SMASH HIT

Local groups, donors team up to revitalize outdoor space

PHOTO BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17

PICKLEBALL HAS OFTEN been called the fastest-growing sport in the U.S., and now the popular paddle pastime has found a home at EMU.

Campus visitors since the start of this year may have noticed six new pickleball courts and four resurfaced tennis courts along Park Road north of the basketball courts. Work on the outdoor space began in mid-October 2024 and finished in December, with nets installed over the winter break. Edwards Paving, a certified installer out of Port Republic, Virginia, completed the project. In addition to the resurfacing, the court lights have been upgraded, and court dividers are now available for use.

The courts have become an immediate hit with the student-run EMU Pickleball Club that plays on them twice a week, as well as with local pickleball enthusiasts around Harrisonburg. **Mike Weaver '90**, a member of the latter group, described the new courts as “fantastic.” “The surface is great, the nets are great, and the lights are a game changer,” he said.

Lexi Brown MA '25 (organizational leadership), associate director of athletic admissions, regularly plays on the courts with her “pickleball posse” of friends. “It gets crazy busy now, which is awesome,” she said. And students like **Mary Kate Bomberger '25** spent many afternoons on the courts during the spring semester. “I love them,” she said. “I come here to play all the time.”

EMU Athletic Director **Carrie S Bert '97** said the goal of the outdoor court enhancement project is to reinforce the university’s commitment to student resources and community engagement. The enhancements make EMU more attractive to prospective students, helping boost enrollment and recruitment efforts. The courts also offer future teaching opportunities such as youth clinics and instruction for beginner players.

'THE UNIVERSE ALIGNED'

The revitalized court space is the result of a collaboration with Eastern Mennonite School (EMS), whose tennis teams practiced and competed on EMU’s courts before they fell into disrepair. **Paul Leaman '86**, head of EMS, and **Obed “Obie” Diener**, an EMS parent and the son of EMU alumni **Eugene '68** and **Gloria Diener '76**, met with Bert to figure out a way they could partner together to resurface the courts.

Funding for the project came from EMS, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, grants from the U.S. Tennis Association, an EMU fund designated for tennis, and other organizations and private donors. Leaman led a fundraising campaign, reaching out to families who had played tennis at EMS over the years, and raised the needed amount within a month. “People saw the need and jumped in,” he said.

Seed donors, led by generous supporters and avid pickleball players **Dale Metzler** and **Barbra Graber Metzler '76**, sparked the idea for pickleball courts at EMU and contributed money to make it a reality. “Pickleball has become the spice of our lives,” said Graber Metzler, a member of the EMU theater faculty from 1981-2005. “When you’re excited about something, you want to share it with others.”

“The universe aligned in terms of interested groups within the community and the willingness of EMU administration to partner with them,” Bert said.

So, what’s next for the outdoor court space? A future phase of the enhancement project will resurface and transform the basketball court area, south of the pickleball courts, into two basketball courts and a futsal court.

THOSE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THE PROJECT CAN EMAIL BERT AT: carrie.bert@emu.edu

PASSING THE BATON

A PRESIDENTIAL PURPOSE

BY RYAN CORNELL WITH PHOTOS BY MACSON MCGUIGAN '17



"THE ROLE WILL BE CHALLENGING. THERE WILL BE HURDLES. BUT HOPE COMES FROM A POWER GREATER THAN THOSE CHALLENGES..."



THE REV. DR. SHANNON W. DYCUS HAS TAKEN THE BATON AS EMU'S INTERIM PRESIDENT,

officially beginning her role on July 1, 2025. Dr. Dycus previously served as vice president for student affairs, equity, and belonging at EMU where she oversaw the Student Life, DEI, and Athletics departments. She was also a member of the Executive Leadership Team and President's Cabinet.

EMU announced the selection of Dr. Dycus as interim president in April after a unanimous vote by the EMU Board of Trustees in March. The decision followed a national search process that began after **Dr. Susan Schultz Huxman**, EMU's ninth president and first woman president, announced her retirement in October 2024, effective June 30, 2025. Dr. Dycus, the first Black woman in EMU history named to the position, will serve a minimum term of two years.

From April through June, Drs. Dycus and Huxman met regularly to discuss the intricacies of the presidency, engage with key community stakeholders, and identify priorities for the year ahead to ensure a smooth transition between leaders.

"The example Susan set for the many female leaders on campus is astounding, and her leadership has empowered us all," Dr. Dycus said. "I've learned so much from the way she has moved through her role, modeled leadership, and created

new space to lead authentically."

Dr. Dycus' responsibilities include promoting the passions, positive outcomes, and successes of the university to both internal and external audiences. "One of the critical roles of a university president is to serve as its chief storyteller," said Dr. Dycus. "To be able to advocate, celebrate, and cheerlead for EMU will be an exciting and essential part of my work as interim president."

As chief storyteller for EMU since 2017, Dr. Huxman is confident in her successor. "Shannon is absolutely the right person to lead EMU into its next chapter. She has the smarts, the stamina, and the faith connections and storytelling gifts."

A CALL TO LEAD

After earning a bachelor of arts in middle and secondary education from Butler University, Dr. Dycus served as a high school teacher in Indianapolis from 2006 to 2008. While she loved the classroom, she sensed a deeper calling that extended beyond teaching toward spiritual leadership. She decided to follow in her family's footsteps and enroll at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS). In 2010, she became a third-generation graduate of CTS, where she earned a master of divinity and was ordained as a minister in the Disciples of Christ tradition.

Rev. Dr. Shannon Dycus speaks at the April 11 announcement event, where she was named EMU's interim president. She is the first Black woman to hold the position.

Dr. Dycus spent time as a hospital chaplain before serving as an academic advisor (2011-2013) and adjunct faculty member (2012-2017) at Franklin University of Ohio's Indianapolis campus.

From 2013 to 2019, Dr. Dycus served as co-pastor of First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis. It was at First Mennonite that former EMU board member **JB Miller '70** first witnessed Dr. Dycus' leadership strengths. Miller said she struck him as "wise beyond her years" during his time as a congregant. "She leads with confidence," he said. "There's a gentleness to it but also a firmness that people find refreshing. She can make tough decisions and is willing to own those tough decisions."

During a sabbatical in 2017, Dr. Dycus attended a summer program in spiritual direction at Eastern Mennonite Seminary—her first introduction to EMU and the surrounding Shenandoah Valley. She recalls falling in love with the campus and imagining a future in Harrisonburg with her husband, Gregory, and their two sons, Malachi and Semaj.

She saw an opportunity to bring her vision to life two years later when EMU posted for the position of dean of students. Dr. Dycus served in that role

from July 2019 until 2023 and as vice president of student affairs and dean of students from 2023 to 2024, before being promoted to vice president for student affairs, equity, and belonging.

Dr. Dycus has “made it a priority to support EMU students as they arrive on campus and to navigate barriers in their education” since 2019 when she created and led the C.A.R.E. Team, a proactive and coordinated response to supporting student needs and their well-being. Dr. Dycus “truly stepped up” to help EMU understand and expand its care and services throughout the pandemic, said Dr. Huxman.

“It was clear that Shannon and the Student Life team were there for us during the pandemic,” said **Merry Yirga '23**. The liberal arts graduate, who now works as EMU’s assistant director of admissions for community partnerships, said Dr. Dycus also helped to grow her leadership skills as product manager of Common Grounds Coffeehouse and co-president of the Black Student Alliance (BSA).

“When we approached Shannon with the idea to paint the Black Lives Matter mural, she gave us her full support and encouraged BSA to bring the idea to President Huxman,” Yirga said. The mural, painted in front of University Commons, was unveiled during the fall semester of 2020.

In 2020 and 2024, Dr. Dycus secured Department of Justice sexual violence prevention grants to fund EMU’s Safer Together office. She has worked with



PHOTO BY RACHEL HOLDERMAN '18

“Shannon brings amazing energy to whatever space she inhabits,” said Jonathan Swartz (second from left), who served on her Student Life team during the pandemic and beyond. Swartz is now EMU’s dean of students.

EMU Counseling Services to increase staffing and training for mental health support, and has been a staunch student advocate for peaceful responses to global injustices.

“Shannon truly embodies what it means to create belonging and foster community,” said **Ruth Abera '25**, a biochemistry graduate who grew up in Ethiopia. “Whether through mentorship, classes, or conversations, she always approaches others with deep compassion and wisdom.”

“I’ve seen so many students grow just by knowing her, observing her, and having the chance to connect with her,” said **Jonathan Swartz MA '14 (conflict transformation), MDiv '14**, dean of students at EMU. “Her steadiness and ability to think quickly and plan well, but not be in a hurry, showed up and shined through during COVID.”

That steady, people-centered leadership is something Dr. Dycus intentionally cultivates. “I’ve been trained to be present with people, to show up and listen, offer empathy, and apply what I’ve learned to shape my leadership,” said Dr. Dycus, who earned a doctor of ministry in public theology from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in 2024.

THE TRACK AHEAD

As Dr. Dycus takes the lead on the track ahead, her top priority remains EMU students—specifically ensuring they have a safe, supportive environment and meaningful learning experiences. Her vision also includes maintaining a strong commitment to a values-based education while continuing to create new pathways of access and achievement for students, as outlined in the university’s 2023-2028 strategic plan. Another leadership focus will be inspiring confidence among faculty and staff while reimagining a more streamlined academic structure that supports long-term financial stability.

Dr. Michael Horst '12, MAC '14, associate professor of counseling and dean for Health, Behavioral, and Natural Sciences at EMU, said he is “beyond delighted” that Dr. Dycus is serving as interim president. Walking across campus with her, he noted, often takes time—she seems to know everyone, and many stop to chat with her.

“One of the many reasons Shannon is exactly who we need in leadership at EMU right now is her meaningful relationships with students, faculty and staff,” he said. “She knows EMU from



Rev. Dr. Shannon Dycus, in her role as vice president of student affairs and dean of students, hands out pins to class of 2024 graduates at a baccalaureate service.

all angles, and she is deeply committed to its mission and values at a time when they're needed more than ever."

Luke Litwiller '19, MA '24 (transformational leadership), director of undergraduate admissions at EMU, said that Dr. Dycus invests in, challenges, and inspires those around her. "I'm so grateful for the leadership, wisdom, and joy that Shannon has brought to EMU,"

he said. "She's already made it a more authentic, compassionate, and supportive place to learn and work, and I know she'll continue to do so in new and exciting ways as interim president."

Dr. Huxman recalled her reaction to Dr. Dycus' selection. "I was elated," she said. "It's a validation of our entire Executive Leadership Team that one of its members is now carrying the baton

forward at EMU."

Dr. Dycus says that evolving EMU will not be easy but that she is hopeful. "The role will be challenging. There will be hurdles. But hope comes from a power greater than those challenges and from people united in purpose," she said. "We can overcome what lies ahead. What we're building together is stronger than anything that stands in our way."



Dr. Susan Schultz Huxman poses with Delegate Tony Wilt and the General Assembly resolution he presented to her at a June retirement celebration held in her honor.

HIGHLIGHTS OF DR. HUXMAN'S PRESIDENCY:

- Served as EMU's first woman president from Jan. 1, 2017, to June 30, 2025.
- Led EMU with inspiration around a new strategic plan, *Pathways of Promise*; revised vision statement and refresh of institutional values; "Lead Together" rebrand and values brand campaign. EMU vision and values were incorporated into the revised core curriculum and graduate curricula; themes based on university values were created and are being integrated into the curriculum and programming.
- Oversaw EMU's recognition as a top producer of academic scholars, including Rhodes and Fulbright awardees; and the addition of doctoral degrees in nursing and ministry, as well as various academic and professional programs such as public health, business analytics, aviation, transformational leadership, faith-based peacebuilding, and global studies.
- Oversaw the launch of the "Belonging and Becoming Together" faculty mentoring and orientation program; the establishment of the Hertzler-Koshy Faculty Fellowship grants; and the rollout of "Viewpoint with Dennis Quaid," a

short-form documentary highlighting EMU's approach to advancing DEI as a peace and justice university, which aired nationwide on public television—efforts that helped to create a more welcoming and inclusive community at EMU.

- Led new capital improvements to EMU buildings, including new engineering labs in the Suter Science Center and University Commons renovations of the Common Grounds Coffeehouse, Student Union, President's Reception Room, and Admissions Office.
- Oversaw the move of EMU at Lancaster to a new state-of-the-art building, the completion of the new Track & Field Complex, and the upgrade to the EMU Turf Field.
- Championed EMU students, faculty and staff with an approachable, can-do leadership style; provided stability and guidance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Engaged with and promoted the compelling stories of EMU's finest ambassadors—students, faculty, staff, board members, donors, alumni and community members—resulting in an increased visibility and profile for EMU in Harrisonburg, across Virginia, and beyond.
- Led the university in setting a fundraising record of \$9.2 million during EMU's Centennial year and steered EMU through the second year of a five-year, \$40 million comprehensive campaign for people, programs and facilities, *Forward Together: Preparing Tomorrow's Unifying Leaders 2023-2028*, raising \$24 million in gifts and commitments by year two.
- Contributed her time and expertise to numerous professional and community organizations, including Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Higher Education Association, Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia, Commonwealth Alliance for Rural Colleges, Marpeck Deans Conference, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce.



EMU GRADS' FLORALS NONPROFIT SELECTED FOR KINDNESS AWARD

In spring 2024, **Rebecca Shelly '14 (psychology)** and **Laura Ruth '09 (social work)** launched **Friendly City Florals**, a Harrisonburg-based nonprofit that spreads joy and reduces waste by repurposing event flowers and donating them to people in need. Selected as a 2024 Kindness Award Recipient by *People Magazine*, the nonprofit has been featured on *The Drew Barrymore Show* and in *Reader's Digest* and *The Washington Post*. (Shelly and Ruth are pictured left to right.) (Photo by The Commoneer)

MILEPOSTS

UNDERGRADUATE

1960-69

Blair M. Seitz '67, Philadelphia, Pa., is a resident at Simpson House, a multicultural continuing care community in Bala Cynwyd (PA).

1970-79

The Rev. Dr. L. Kenneth Fellenbaum '71, SEM '77, Milford, Conn., celebrated his 50th anniversary in the ministry. He is the pastor of Wildermere Beach Congregational Church in Milford.

James Douglas Bell '79, Graham, N.C., retired from full-time ministry after 42 years of service as a pastor in the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. He held eight different church appointments in North Carolina, including in Rocky Mount, Enfield, Benson, Hampstead, Durham, Roanoke Rapids, and Wilson.

Sylvia Clymer Helmuth '79, Harrisonburg, Va., retired in 2020 after 35 years as an educator.

1980-89

Linford Lee Good '80, Lancaster, Pa., received the 2024 Everence Journey Award in recognition of his over 25 years of service to Landis Communities where he recently retired as community design specialist.

Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz '81, Ephrata, Pa., the denominational minister for peace and justice for Mennonite Church USA, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice at the 9th Annual National Conference of Community and Restorative Justice in Washington, DC, on July 30, 2024.

Jenifer Hartzler '84, Sterling, Ohio, is the owner of Jenn's Downsizing LLC, which assists seniors in moving to new living locations. She helps clients downsize their home goods,

antiques and extra items by selling, thrifting, gifting and donating goods.

Marie S. Morris '84, Anderson, Ind., is the office coordinator for Park Place Church of God, where she finds joy in supporting the pastoral team, church members, and various ministries.

1990-99

Laurel B. Alderfer Dean '94, Elkton, Va., is an accounts receivable team expert for Carahsoft Technology Corp., an IT distributor based in Reston (VA).

Lesley Rutt Dyck '94, Goshen, Ind., is a registered nurse for the imaging department at Goshen Health. She also works as a Spanish-English medical interpreter for the independent community-owned health system.

Stephanie Wenger Hartzler '94, Manheim, Pa., is with Norlanco Urgent Care in Lancaster County.

Kristine "Crickett" Quillin Hill '94, Prescott, Ariz., is a licensed medical massage therapist specializing in PTSD/injury/atrophy at Veterans Affairs hospitals and chiropractic offices in the Prescott area.

Crystal Campbell '95, Mount Crawford, Va., teaches fifth grade at Linville-Edom Elementary School in Rockingham County (VA).

Carey Keyes '98, Elkton, Va., is athletic director of Central High School in Woodstock (VA). He previously served as the boys' basketball coach at East Rockingham High School for 11 seasons, amassing a 205-77 record.

Jill Landis Jha '99, MA '10, Goshen, Ind., is a writing and editing consultant for UNICEF Nigeria and other country and regional offices.

2000-09

Russell Tecumseh James '03, Corvallis, Ore., received a master of fine arts from

Eastern Oregon University in July 2024. He is a freelance writer.

Stephen Hinkley Gibbs Jr. '04, Rockingham, Va., is associate director of user services in the IT department at EMU.

Martha Sachs Magana '04, Fremont, Calif., is an instructional coach for the Fremont Unified School District.

2010-19

Jennifer Blankenship Hitt '13, Mount Crawford, Va., is assistant principal at Page County Middle School (VA).

Brendan Erb '14, Columbus, Ohio, received his master of library and information science degree, with school library media K-12 licensure, from Kent State University in August 2024. He is a middle school librarian in Dublin City Schools (OH).

Molly Nicole Smith '14, Port Republic, Va., is an assistant principal intern at East Rockingham High School in Elkton (VA).

Melinda Norris Mdluli '15, Williamsburg, Va., is celebrating one year as executive director of HEART Ministries Inc., a faith-based humanitarian nonprofit based in West Point (VA).

Dr. Eyan Roth '16, Hesston, Kan., graduated from the University of Kansas' Via Christi Family Medicine Residency in June 2024. He is a primary care physician at Newton Medical Center (KS).

Aron Harder '17, Charlottesville, Va., is part of a UVA team that won the Indy Autonomous Challenge speed trial at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in September 2024. The team's driverless racecar won the competition with a top average speed of 171 mph.

Allan Oloo '17, Richmond, Va., is co-founder of the San Francisco-based startup Ribbon, which provides estate settlement solutions for financial services.

Raleigh Wade Atkinson '18, Rapidan, Va., is a registered nurse at UVA Health Dialysis in Orange (VA).

Micah Daniel Boyer '19, East Earl, Pa., is head of renewable gas at Dutchland LLC, a manufacturer of concrete tanks for wastewater and water retention and treatment.

Rebekah Hoskins McCulloch '19, Chatham, Va., is a Regional Education Assessment Crisis Services Habilitation clinical supervisor for New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS) in Radford (VA). NRVCS is a public provider of behavioral health services offering community-based programs for children and adults living with mental illness, developmental disabilities and/or substance use disorders.

2020-

Alicinda Rae Brubaker Puffenbarger '22, Keezletown, Va., is a marketing and production assistant at Valley Media Group in Rockingham County (VA).

Zafri Yussuff '22, Arlington, Va., launched his website, ZY Digital Media, showcasing his talent and portfolio in graphic design, photography and video editing.

Indigo Gott '24, Rockingham, Va., is a family services specialist and Child Protective Services investigator with Shenandoah Valley Social Services, supporting Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County in Virginia.

John Aaron Jantzen '24, Newton, Kan., is an English teacher in Ansan, South Korea.



GRAD GUIDES PARALYMPIANS

Philip Watson Jr. '16, a standout sprinter at EMU from Philadelphia, helped to train two Liberian amputee athletes who participated in the 2024 Summer Paralympics in Paris: Jutomu Kollie, who competed in the men's 100-meter dash, long jump, and javelin throw; and Angie Myers, who made the women's shot put finals. "Getting to know them and see their hard work pay off was incredibly fulfilling," said Watson, who also serves as a guide runner for a visually impaired sprinter from Liberia who was unable to make the trip to Paris.

Watson, whose parents emigrated from Liberia to the United States in the 1980s, had hoped to represent the Liberian national track and field team at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. When that dream failed to materialize, he found another. He learned that former EMU track teammate Connor Faint '18 had been chosen as a guide runner for the U.S. Paralympic team and sprang into action, researching as much as he could about Liberia's Paralympic team and contacting its organizer. He began working with the team in 2019 to prepare for the Tokyo Paralympics (held in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). (Photo courtesy of Philip Watson Jr.)

EMU FIRSTGEN FORWARD

EMU has been selected for inclusion in the FirstGen Forward Network, recognized for its "demonstrated commitment to improving experiences and advancing success for first-generation college students." The FirstGen Forward Network engages and empowers higher education institutions "to transform the first-generation student experience, advance academic and co-curricular outcomes, and build more inclusive institutional structures." Members participate in monthly workshops, networking and professional development opportunities; share knowledge and resources; and contribute to a peer community.

"Our hope in defining this community of learners is to be attentive to students and families who arrive on campus without existing knowledge of higher education, financial aid... who encounter jargon and processes that create barriers instead of support," said the Rev. Dr. Shannon W. Dycus, former vice president for student affairs, equity, and belonging at EMU. At least 35 percent of EMU undergraduates identify as first-generation students. EMU is one of 80 new members named to the FirstGen Forward Network for 2024-2025, bringing the total to 429 higher education institutions across 49 states and Washington, DC. (Image courtesy of FirstGenForward)



GRADUATE

Keith Lyndaker Schlabach GC '08 (conflict transformation), Millersburg, Ohio, is co-pastor of Millersburg Mennonite Church with his wife, **Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach MDiv '07**. He is also co-founder of PeaceGrooves, a project centered around the creation of alternative media, stories and games that reflect an Anabaptist nonviolent perspective. He writes about his ongoing journey to see Jesus in new ways on his blog SlowMover.org and explores creative peacebuilding at PeaceGrooves.com.

Muhammad Asadullah MA '11 (conflict transformation), Regina, Sask., Canada, is an associate professor at the University of Regina's Department of Justice Studies. A 2024 Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Teaching Award recipient, he is also a 2022 President's Teaching Scholar, an honor reserved for those who demonstrate a strong commitment to teaching and learning excellence at the university.

Muhammad Ishaq Israr GC '22 (nonprofit leadership), Mardan, Pakistan, is CEO of Penny Appeal UK. The charity provides poverty relief across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa by offering water solutions, organizing mass feedings, supporting orphan care, and providing emergency food and medical aid.

Keren Kandel MA '23 (conflict transformation), Wichita, Kan., is executive director of the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR). She has a background in peacebuilding (including work in Palestine/Israel) and conflict transformation, with an interest in faith-rooted organizations and trauma healing.

Cameron Carter GC '24 (conflict transformation), Ashland, Va., is the next generation internship coordinator with the Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI) at Princeton University. BDI is a nonpartisan research initiative that tracks and mitigates political violence in the United States.

Anna Dovbyk MA '24 (conflict transformation), Cologne, Germany, is a project manager with European Center for Strategic Analytics' Dialogue in Action. The initiative develops a culture of communication and cooperation in small territorial communities of Ukraine through facilitated dialogues, trainings, and consultations.

Ishtiaq Khan MA '24 (conflict transformation), Urbana, Ill., established a restorative justice practice and mediation program at the Central Illinois Mosque & Islamic Center in Champaign-Urbana (IL). He is a refugee resettlement specialist at The Refugee Center in Champaign (IL) where he supports refugees in rebuilding their lives, advocating for their rights, and fostering their social integration.

David Malual Wuor Kuany MA '24 (conflict transformation), Juba, South Sudan, is an analyst with the United Nations Development Programme, an agency that works in 170 countries and territories to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality.

Selena Sherzad MA '24 (conflict transformation), Harrisonburg, Va., is a policy and advocacy coordinator with Church World Service where she champions policies that safeguard human rights and support vulnerable communities, specifically on amplifying housing as a human right for all.

Joshua Sperry MA '24 (transformational leadership), Berkeley, Calif., is a union representative with the California Teachers

Association. He works to organize teachers and other school staff members around their demands for better schools and working conditions and justice for their students and communities.

DeMonté Wesley MA '24 (transformational leadership), Houston, Texas, is the assistant director of partnerships and communications for the National Center on Restorative Justice and an advisory board member for Restorative Houston.

BIRTHS AND ADOPTIONS

Jackson Maust '09 and **Katrina Lehman '09**, Kezletown, Va., Clara Joy, April 24, 2024.

Peyton Erb '11, Harrisonburg, Va., Trevor James, Feb. 17, 2022.

Stephanie Nicole DeHart '11 and Eric Hewitt, Roanoke, Va., Talim Sophia, March 21, 2024.

Abigail Grace Carr '14 and Nathaniel Pierce Scheibner, Garner, N.C., Rosalie Madilyn, Dec. 19, 2022.

David Jacob Hooley '15 and Natalie Graber, Goshen, Ind., June Graber, March 21, 2025.

Courtney Marie Unruh '16 and Austin Goering, Moundridge, Kan., Emmett Anthony, July 12, 2024.

Hannah Weaver '16 and Eyan Roth '16, Hesston, Kan., Felix Austin, Oct. 8, 2024.

Olivia Paul '20, Ocala, Fla., Nikerson Etha, Jan. 17, 2023.

MARRIAGES

Mattie Horning '09 to Chris Early, Vail, Colo., June 30, 2024.

Shana Kennell '11 to Benjamin Mix, Harrisonburg, Va., April 20, 2024.

Alicinda Rae Brubaker '22 to Wade Puffenbarger, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 24, 2024.

Kenzie Gardner '23 to **Andrew Zook '23**, Harrisonburg, Va., May 18, 2024.

DEATHS

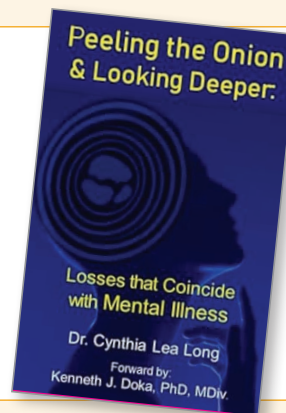
Karl William Clemmensen, staff, Langhorne, Pa., died at age 66 on April 11, 2024. Clemmensen fell in love with flying at age 12, earned his private pilot license before he could even drive, and landed his first job as a flight instructor in Charlotte (NC). He spent 35 years as a commercial pilot for Piedmont Airlines (later American Airlines) and joined the aviation faculty at EMU at Lancaster in 2021. Married to Kim Clemmensen, he held a bachelor's degree in transportation technology from Florida Institute of Technology and a master's degree in aeronautical science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Lila Basinger Collins, staff, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 88 on Feb. 28, 2025. After graduating from Eastern Mennonite High School, she worked for 36 years as a typist at EMC. She was a member of Lindale Mennonite Church in Linville (VA) and had one daughter with her husband of 66 years, John Edward Collins.

Lewis Rhodes Driver, staff, Rockingham, Va., died at age 76 on May 18, 2024. He graduated from Eastern Mennonite High School in 1967 and served in voluntary service in Pueblo (CO) from 1968 to 1970. He retired as a plumber from EMU and later enjoyed being a friendly face to students as a Rockingham County bus driver for eight years. A member of Grace Covenant Church who supported



Kate Baer '07, a 3x *New York Times* bestselling author, is publishing her third full-length poetry collection, "How About Now" (Harper Perennial, 2025), which channels her journey to middle age into poems about growing older, releasing children into their own lives, and reclaiming an ever-evolving self.

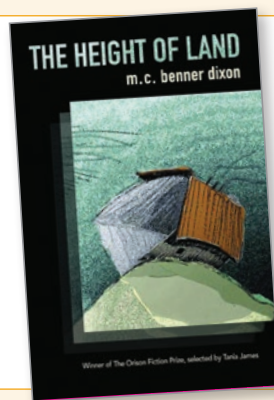
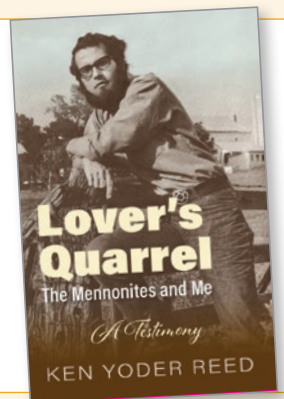


Cynthia L. Long '87 has self-published "Peeling the Onion & Looking Deeper: Losses that Coincide with Mental Illness" to help people experiencing mental health challenges identify and validate various losses while offering practical tools and resources for navigating them. She is lead chaplain at Sunnyside Communities in Harrisonburg.

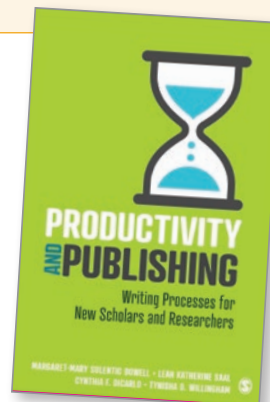
Kirsten Eve Beachy '02 has published "Martyrs and Chickens: Confessions of a Granola Mennonite" (Dreamseeker Books, 2025), a memoir of collected essays about her life married to a Mennonite boy from a dairy farm.



Ken Yoder Reed '66 has published "Lover's Quarrel: The Mennonites and Me - A Testimony" (Masthof Press, 2025), a memoir of his journey from Lancaster County to Japan and Silicon Valley, navigating lost love, conscientious objection during the Vietnam War, and reconciliation with a faith he once resisted.

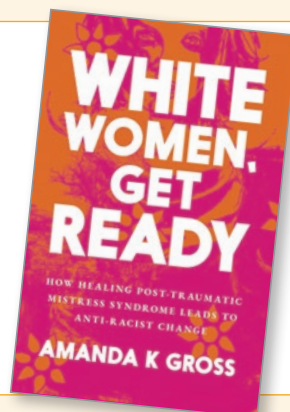


Christine Benner Dixon '04 won publication of "The Height of Land" (Orison Books, 2025) as the 2022 Orison Fiction Prize recipient. Her debut novel follows the quest of a young man torn between spiritual longing and commitment to his community's survival in a harsh landscape.

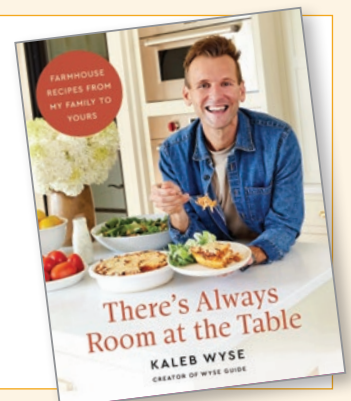


Tynisha D. Willingham, provost and vice president of academic affairs at EMU, co-authored "Productivity and Publishing: Writing Processes for New Scholars and Researchers" (SAGE Publications, 2022), which addresses research agendas, realistic writing goals, and time-tested and editor-approved processes for writing and revising journal articles.

Amanda K. Gross '07, MA '13 (conflict transformation) has published "White Women, Get Ready: How Healing Post-Traumatic Mistress Syndrome Leads to Anti-Racist Change" (Otterpine, 2024), which explores how white women have been groomed to uphold overlapping systems of oppression and how they can use their unique position to upend them.



Kaleb Wyse '10 authored his debut cookbook, "There's Always Room at the Table: Farmhouse Recipes from My Family to Yours" (Harvest, 2025), a *New York Times* bestseller featuring classic, midwestern family recipes updated with modern spins and ingredients.





BUSINESS, BASEBALL AND BOATS

Hunter Sturgeon '25 (pictured right), a business administration major with a promising career in the seafood industry, successfully balanced his time as an EMU baseball player with his academics and work at Matheson Oyster Co., an oyster farm based in his hometown of Gloucester, Virginia. Beginning in high school, Sturgeon worked as a waterman in crab boats like his grandfathers before him. In summer 2024, Sturgeon landed a job as a farm assistant at Matheson Oyster Co. and has since been promoted to operations coordinator. In his new position, he oversees the process of prepping oysters from the nursery to the farm to restaurants and markets. With plans to train for the role of COO in the near future, Sturgeon will also help to lead Matheson Oyster's new catering company and partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. (Photo courtesy of Matheson Oyster Co.)

missions, he loved God, his wife of 53 years, Rhea Bowman Driver, and their two children.

Donald "Don" Paul Foth, staff, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 90 on March 27, 2024. Orphaned at age 16, he earned an accounting degree from Friends University in Wichita and chose to do alternative service with Mennonite Central Committee in Akron (PA) where he met his wife, **Margaret Jantz Foth '54**. They had four children. In 1977, the family moved to Virginia where he accepted a position as comptroller for EMU. He was a member of Park View Mennonite Church.

Marci Frederick, staff, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 63 on Aug. 25, 2024. She held a bachelor's degree and three master's degrees and was beloved by students and colleagues alike as director of libraries at Trinity Christian College, King's University College, the Institute for Christian Studies, and EMU, where she served from 2015 until her death. She was also a song leader and itinerant preacher who touched many lives. She loved baseball, her husband of 26 years, **Paul Cook**, and their child.

Elroy Wayne Kauffman, staff, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 92 on March 4, 2025. He worked in the EMC Business Office in the 1960s through '80s and later as a bookkeeper for Virginia Mennonite Conference. He served on the boards of Gemeinschaft Home, the Brethren & Mennonite Heritage Center, and Park View Federal Credit Union. He enjoyed photography, unusual and innovative cars, and singing with the Shenandoah Valley Choral Society and as a member of the Lindale Octet with his wife, Miriam Lucille Kuhns, with whom he had three sons.

Peggy L. Reusser, staff, North Newton, Kan., died at age 88 on Nov. 3, 2024. She served on two missionary assignments with the General Conference Mennonite Mission: in Taiwan from 1966 to 1969 and in Hong Kong from 1985 to 1987. She worked as a secretary at Hesston College, Hesston Corporation, and EMC. In the early '90s, she embraced a career as an 18-wheeler truck driver, which she pursued with pride until her retirement at age 79. She and her husband, Loren, had three daughters.

William "Bill" Fredrick Rushby, faculty, Crown Point, N.Y., died at age 83 on Nov. 24, 2024. He graduated from Michigan State and taught at Central Michigan University, Manchester College, and EMC, where he was hired as assistant professor of sociology in 1973. He enjoyed writing scholarly essays on Anabaptism, correct grammar, laughter, and living out his Orthodox Quaker faith with his wife, Darlene Osborn Rushby, on a farm in Virginia's Blue Grass Valley.

Violet Arlene Troyer Miller '46, Goessel, Kan., died at age 97 on April 6, 2024. After graduating as an RN from the LaJunta Mennonite School of Nursing (CO) in 1949, she worked part-time as a nurse while raising four children on a farm near Hydro (OK) with her husband, Donald R. Miller. When the family moved to Clinton (OK), she worked as a floor nurse and in supervisory roles in medical, surgical, and intensive care wards in local hospitals until her retirement in 1997. She dedicated her life to the Mennonite faith.

John Knight Brenneman '50, Ephrata, Pa., died at age 99 on Dec. 19, 2024. He earned a bachelor of arts in Bible from EMC and an MS in education from Temple University. After marrying Lois Ellen Hege in 1951, he taught school for 35 years, mostly in the Solanco School District (PA), retiring from George

A. Smith Middle School in 1987. He also worked as a tour guide in Lancaster County for 48 years, wrote Sunday school curriculum materials for Christian Light Publications, and served as minister at East Hanover Mennonite Church near Hershey (PA) from 1976 to 1998.

Huldah Claude, class of '50, Wilmington, N.C., died at age 94 on Jan. 18, 2023. She worked as a psychiatric nurse, belonged to painting and carving clubs, and at the request of her three daughters wrote "Mom, You Gotta Write This Down!" The memoir is about her life of faith as a mother, wife to **John Claude** for 60 years, and adventures in Switzerland, the Congo, Charleston (WV), and Wilmington, where she painted vignettes on kindness rocks and hid them in parks and playgrounds for people to find.

Martha Jane Turner Rohrer, class of '50, Philadelphia, died at age 96 on Nov. 2, 2024. She published her first book of poetry, "Life After Death," in 2002 at age 74 and her second book, "Acquiring Land: Late Poems" in 2020 at age 91. She had two sons with her husband, painter **Warren Rohrer, class of '50**, and her poems about her life and his art were published regularly in *The American Poetry Review*, the 1993 anthology "Parallels: Artists/Poets," and other journals. She was one of the first poets with a conservative Mennonite background to publish in mainstream American literary journals, magazines, and anthologies.

Salome Snyder Harrison '51, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, died at age 101 on March 6, 2024. Married to S. Leslie Harrison, she spent over 35 years involved with church camps, mentoring many children. Her favorite hobbies were ceramics and quilting.

Paul L. Swarr '51, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 97 on Jan. 31, 2025. Ordained to the ministry at East Petersburg Mennonite Church (PA), he spent 30 years in Israel with his wife, Bertha Carolyn Wenger Swarr, teaching math to high school-aged children in a Baptist orphanage, working as a tour guide and manager catering to Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, and serving as general secretary of the United Christian Council and co-pastor of Beit Immanuel in Jaffa. The couple then spent 20 years with Youth With A Mission (YWAM), pioneering the School of Church Planting and Leadership in Ghana, South Africa, and Brazil. Married for 64 years, they had three children.

Elizabeth M. Brubaker Zook, class of '51, Lititz, Pa., died at age 94 on July 15, 2023. During her 17-year teaching career, she taught in Pennsylvania at Linville Mennonite School, Belleville Mennonite School, and Locust Grove Mennonite School, where she started the kindergarten program. She was cited by *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* for her accomplishments. She and her husband, **Floyd I. Zook '53**, had five children.

Alice Byler Souder, class of '52, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 94 on Nov. 18, 2024. She and her husband of 70 years, **Eugene Souder '51**, with whom she had four children, helped to start Mount Vernon Mennonite Church in Grottoes (VA). She hosted many meals around their table, typed hundreds of church bulletins as the volunteer church secretary, taught Vacation Bible School and Sunday School classes, and led women's Bible studies. She was also the bookkeeper and organized adviser for her husband's house-building and publishing projects.

James Kolb Stauffer '53, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 94 on Nov. 13, 2024. Ordained in 1953, he went on to earn an MDiv from



STUDENT SHOWCASES CANCER RESEARCH

Junior Roumany Sefin, a medical laboratory science and business administration double major with minors in biology and finance, represented EMU at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Annual Meeting in Chicago in April. He presented his research, "A Novel, Highly Sensitive, Rapid, and Cost-Effective Test for the Early Detection of Cancer," at the meeting's undergraduate student caucus and poster competition alongside students from top universities around the world. Sefin's project focuses on developing an innovative method to aid in early detection of cancer. His approach targets a specific protein, commonly overexpressed across various cancer types. By binding antibodies targeting this protein to a specific nanomaterial, he designed a test that detects protein concentrations in whole blood samples with high sensitivity and accuracy. His work, developed over five years, earned internal recognition through EMU's Kauffman-Miller Research Awards and drew support from professors and researchers at top institutions. Sefin is also a member of the AACR, a distinction granted based on the strength of his work. (Photo courtesy of Roumany Sefin)

Elkhart Anabaptist Mennonite Seminary and serve as pastor/co-pastor in churches in Ohio, Vietnam, Virginia, North Carolina, and Hawaii. He and his wife, Arlene Krupp Stauffer, served with Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) in Vietnam from 1957 to 1975 and in the Philippines for two years before returning to Harrisonburg to co-pastor Weavers Mennonite Church. After her death in 1985, he married Ruth LaVerne Yoder. Together, they served with EMM in Hawaii from 1989 to 1995. He had three children.

Paul E. Thomas '53, Kidron, Ohio, died at age 93 on March 11, 2025. He taught middle school science in Virginia and Ohio and worked in the lab at Pomerene Hospital in Millersburg (OH). After retiring, he volunteered at Pomerene Rehab as well as Save & Serve and Mennonite Central Committee Connections Thrift Shops. He and his wife of 44 years, **Irene Miller Thomas**, had four children.

John Burnell Shenk '54, Lititz, Pa., died at age 91 on March 28, 2022. Ordained in 1963, he served as a minister at East Petersburg Mennonite Church (PA) for 35 years. He also worked for 36 years as an administrator and counselor for the Sharing Programs of Lancaster Mennonite Conference. He and his wife of 65 years, **Myrtle Mann Brennenman Shenk '55**, had three children.

Lois Ruth Kennel, class of '56, Rochester, Minn., died at age 92 on Feb. 7, 2025. After earning a teaching degree from Temple University, she worked summers at the Pearl S. Buck Welcome House in Philadelphia and taught English for 11 years in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, and Minnesota. A lifelong arts lover, she held many roles with the Rochester Music Guild between 1975 and 2005, directed a church youth choir for 20 years, sang in the Choral Arts Ensemble and Rochester Symphony Orchestra Chorale, and performed duets and solos until she was 90. She and her husband, **Arthur John Kennel '53**, raised two children in the Mennonite faith and ran a llama breeding business for 30 years.

Rev. Dr. John Ivan Smucker '56, New Holland, Pa., died at age 94 on Dec. 19, 2024. He was licensed to the Mennonite ministry at age 27 and sent to New York City as an urban missionary in 1957. During his nearly 50 years there, he served as pastor of the Mennonite House of Friendship, Immanuel Community Church, and First Presbyterian Church of Flushing. Smucker held five degrees; was a professor at Elim Bible Institute; served as dean, professor, and board member of the New York School of Urban Ministry; and wrote the autobiographies "From Bird-in-Hand to the Bronx" and "The Blessings of an Extended Sabbatical." He and his wife, **Irene Yoder Smucker, class of '58**, were married for 70 years and had four children.

Mary Lapp Swartley '57, Cedar Falls, Iowa, died at age 90 on Dec. 11, 2024. She earned an MS in business education from JMU and taught business and PE classes at Christopher Dock High School (PA), Eastern Mennonite High School and EMU, and Bethany Christian High School (IN). She was also assistant director of admissions at EMU, co-edited the book "She Has Done a Good Thing: Mennonite Leaders Tell Their Stories," and wrote the memoir "My Treasured Hopes: My Four Score Years+." She lived out her lifelong Mennonite faith with her husband, **Willard Myers Swartley '59**, and their daughter.

Alice Swift '57, Verona, Va., died at age 96 on April 1, 2022. She loved to garden in her

younger years, and throughout her life, she had a great sense of humor and a compassionate love for her family. She and her husband, Charles Leeroy Swift, had four children.

Anna Martha Stahl Nissley '58, Lititz, Pa., died at age 93 on Sept. 11, 2024. She earned a master's degree in elementary education from Millersville University and taught second grade at Paradise Elementary School in Lancaster County. She was also a self-taught watercolor artist and a prolific writer who published "Real People," "Second Wife," "Amanda's Father," and "By Birth or By Choice: Who Can Become a Mennonite?" She and her first husband, Pastor Omar B. Stahl, served as missionaries through Eastern Mennonite Missions to Neuberg, Germany. After his death in 2002, she married Clayton R. Nissley.

Alice Rini, class of '58, Munroe Falls, Ohio, died at age 96 on July 21, 2024. After earning a degree in elementary education from Kent State, she taught briefly at Lake Center Christian Day School in Hartsville (OH) and spent the majority of her career teaching fifth grade in the Field Local School District in Brimfield (OH). A member of Beech Mennonite Church in Louisville (OH), she was married to Nick Marion Rini for 25 years.

Dorcas Rolón '58, Coatesville, Pa., died at age 93 on Nov. 13, 2024. She and her husband, Samuel Rolón, had four children and lived in Puerto Rico, Belgium, Indiana, and Pennsylvania during their 57 years of marriage. She worked as a voluntary service nurse in Puerto Rico and as an RN at Hospital Menonita in Aibonito (PR) and Ephrata Community Hospital (PA). She was also a missionary in Brussels and an active church participant through sewing circles and Sunday school teaching.

Marjorie Shenk, class of '58, Elida, Ohio, died at age 91 on July 19, 2024. Known for her generosity, hospitality and quick wit, she worked into her 80s in a variety of places including the family dairy farm, Jarvis Employment, Northwestern Business College, Vistron Corporation, and Snow Printing. An active member of Salem Mennonite Church for many years, she and her husband of over 70 years, Paul D. Shenk, had two children.

John Lee Spicher '58, Lancaster, Pa., died at age 88 on June 21, 2024. A certified American Society of Safety Engineers member, he enjoyed a 30-year career in R&D at Westinghouse Electric Corporation in Pittsburgh. He then earned an MA in organizational leadership from Geneva College and worked for 13 years in various roles in EMU's Suter Science Center. He deeply appreciated the Mennonite Church and treasured trips to the Atlantic Shore with his wife of nearly 65 years, Virginia Joy Peachey Spicher, and their three children.

Dr. John Rutt '59, Lititz, Pa., died at age 86 on Sept. 15, 2024. He practiced family medicine for over 40 years in eastern Lancaster County, delivering nearly 3,000 babies and caring for patients from "womb to tomb," as he liked to say. A member of Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, he and his wife of 65 years, **Rebecca C. Hartzler Rutt '59**, had three children. His granddaughter, **Olivia Beiler '23**, won the 2024 New Grad of the Year Award for Nursing Excellence as an RN at the VCU Health Pauley Heart Center.

Richard Stoltzfus '59, Dayton, Va., died at age 87 on Nov. 11, 2024. After earning a chemistry degree from EMC, he worked for three years in a medical laboratory at Columbia University. While living in New York



KRYPTOS CONTEST CHAMPIONS: CRACKING THE CODE

Laura Benner '25, an engineering and computer science double major, joined junior Renae Benner and Mana Acosta '25—both engineering majors—to win first place at the 2025 International Kryptos Codebreaking Competition in April. Hosted by Central Washington University since 2011, the annual online competition for undergraduate students consists of three challenges that present brief scenarios along with some ciphertext; contestants work individually or in teams to discover the original English plaintext message. EMU's team of three took top honors in a field of 70 teams from colleges and universities across 16 states and Australia. The first-place finish is EMU's sixth in 11 years since first competing in 2014. Acosta and Laura Benner were on the team that won in 2023; Acosta also took first in 2022, and Laura Benner placed second with her sister Renae in 2024. (Photo by Macson McGuigan '17)



TEACHER TRAINING: TURNING THE TIDE

A brand-new Teaching and Learning Graduate Certificate, launched through EMU's Graduate Teacher Education program in spring 2025, is helping educators better serve students while tackling the nationwide teacher shortage. Designed for those with a bachelor's degree and provisional license, the 15-credit, five-course certificate meets the requirements of the Virginia Department of Education for a professional license; it can also serve as a standalone credential. Additionally, courses within the certificate—which are asynchronous, online and rooted in restorative justice in education principles—can be applied toward a master's degree in education. To learn more, visit: emu.edu/maed/teaching-learning-certificate (Photo by Macson McGuigan '17)



FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND DMIN PROGRAM

Eastern Mennonite Seminary will welcome the first cohort of students in August to its brand-new doctor of ministry (DMin) in peacemaking and social change program—the first of its kind to combine study in the fields of justice, peacemaking, and theology. Students in this three-year program will spend about 15 hours per week completing one asynchronous, online course at a time; each course is designed and taught by full-time EMS faculty with continuing contracts and terminal degrees (PhD, DMin) in relevant fields. Students will also engage in practicing ministry and are encouraged to pursue doctoral research that enhances their current ministry. Graduates will be prepared to lead in faith-based settings, including in congregations, nonprofits, community organizing, and some teaching roles. To learn more, visit: emu.edu/seminary/degree-programs/dmin (Photo by Jon Styer '07)



LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

Anne Showalter '90, Chapel Hill, N.C., is following in the steps of her father, **Donald Showalter '62**, who was the first EMU graduate to earn a law degree; he retired in 2024 after practicing law at Wharton Aldhizer & Weaver in Harrisonburg for 59 years. She grew up reading case law books from his library and listening to stories from his legal career, which inspired her to become a lawyer. She earned bachelor's degrees in biology and English from EMU and was accepted to medical school, but ultimately decided she was better suited for law and earned a JD from the University of Virginia.

She has “more than 25 years of diverse legal experience, including leading a team of 40 lawyers across eight countries at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), serving as general counsel of a clinical-stage pharmaceutical company, and working in a top Boston law firm,” she told the *Daily News-Record*. She serves as senior vice president and general counsel of supply chain, contracting and digital, privacy and cybersecurity at GSK. (Photo courtesy of Amy Stern Photography)

City, he met and married Elaine Hunter. He practiced medicine in Haiti for two three-year terms with Mennonite Central Committee and later spent 35 years as an internal medicine physician in Harlan (KY) where he also served for over 30 years as medical director of hospice. He and Elaine were married for 62 years and had two children.

Wilma Jean Beachy Gingerich '60, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 90 on May 19, 2024. She served in Luxembourg as a missionary with the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions from 1961 to 1968 with her husband, **Ray C. Gingerich '60**. There, she supported his work as a pastor and founder/manager of a Christian bookstore while helping to raise their four sons. Upon returning to the States, she worked nights as a nurse aide while earning her bachelor of science in nursing from Goshen College. After the family moved to Harrisonburg in 1977, she earned a master's in community health nursing from UVA and worked as an RN at Rockingham Memorial Hospital, in nursing administration at Virginia Mennonite Home and Camelot nursing home, and as a hospice nurse.

Marvin R. Ketcham, class of '60, Halsey, Ore., died at age 86 on Oct. 13, 2024. Ordained to the ministry under the Indiana-Michigan Conference (a regional body of MC USA), he served as a pastor in Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. Throughout his life, he also worked in carpentry and as a hospital orderly, grocery store clerk, activities director at a nursing home, school teacher for 15 years, office worker, and owner of a variety store he started in Oregon with his wife of 64 years, Edith Hostetler Ketcham, and their four children.

Eileen Zehr Lehman '60, MA '83 (education), Hilliard, Ohio, died at age 91 on May 20, 2024. She and her husband, **Elmer J. Lehman '60**, graduated from EMC—she with a bachelor's in elementary education and he with a bachelor's in Bible and music. They served for 22 years with Rosedale Mennonite Missions in Costa Rica where they planted churches and performed pastoral and administrative work. While there, they adopted five children. After returning to Harrisonburg in 1983, she earned her master's from EMC and taught Weekday Religious Education in Rockingham County. In 1986, the couple moved to Hilliard where they helped to plant two churches, and she worked as a special education instructor for the Hilliard City School District until her retirement in 2000.

Marie Lois Snively, class of '60, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 87 on Aug. 28, 2024. After earning a degree from Lancaster General Hospital School of Nursing in 1961, she worked as a nurse at two hospitals in Kansas and at Hershey Medical Center (PA) for 25 years. She enjoyed vacationing on Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine where she collected sea glass for her artistic creations. She was a member of Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster County before moving to Harrisonburg in 2016.

Werner Will '60, Summerville, S.C., died at age 93 on Feb. 28, 2025. After World War II, he and his family were forcibly relocated from their home in present-day Poland to East Germany. Several years later, Will escaped to Luxembourg where he found a job as a farmhand with a Mennonite family who helped him emigrate to the United States and secure a scholarship at EMC. There, he met Emma Grace Bontrager. The two married and had four children. Will taught German language and civilization for 26

years at Western Illinois University. After he retired, the couple ran a B&B in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana for 15 years before moving to Summerville in 2015. He wrote the autobiography “From the Oder to the Bitterroot.”

Lloyd L. Gingerich '61, Plain City, Ohio, died at age 92 on July 12, 2024. Ordained to the ministry in 1961 at Johnsville Mennonite Church (JMC) in Ohio, he and his wife, **Mary Swartzentruber Gingerich '60**, spent 11 years in Germany with Rosedale Mennonite Missions, ministering to war refugees, children, and individuals struggling with alcoholism. After returning to the States in 1972, they pastored JMC for eight years, East Fairview Mennonite Church (NE) for 15 years, Sunnyside Mennonite Church (IL) for four years, and Covenant Fellowship (OH) for three years. The couple had four children.

Byron Lloyd Nice '61, Durham, N.C., died at age 94 on Oct. 11, 2024. He earned a degree in science from EMC, and in 1974, moved to North Carolina where he helped with the new Durham Mennonite Church and taught science at Hillside High School, retiring in 1994. He and his wife, Nettie Rebekah Zook, had four children.

Paul Lehman Wenger Jr. '61, Sarasota, Fla., died at age 85 on May 23, 2024. After earning a master's in early childhood education from William & Mary, he pursued seminary training, taught in Kidron (OH) for a year, then moved to Chicago to pastor a small, inner-city Mennonite church. He later moved to Richmond where he served as principal of an all-Black school and pastored First Mennonite Church. He ended his career as an administrator at Sarasota Christian School, retiring in Florida with his wife of 62 years, Margaret Witmer Wenger, with whom he had two children.

Ellen Elaine Kauffman Yoder '61, Plain City, Ohio, died at age 89 on April 19, 2024. She met her husband of 61 years, Kenneth Yoder, with whom she had two children, while teaching in Florida at Sarasota Christian School. They lived on a farm for 38 years in Garden City (MO) where she added two master's degrees to her two bachelor's degrees and taught at four elementary schools, retiring from Sherwood Elementary as school librarian in 1995. In 2000, the couple moved to Ohio, where they were members of the United Bethel Mennonite Church.

Dr. Jon Bender '62, Schwenksville, Pa., died at age 84 on Nov. 29, 2024. He earned his doctor of education degree from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1971 and served as a lead teacher and principal in several Rockingham County (VA) public schools, assistant professor of early childhood education at JMU, the founding principal of Hinkletown Mennonite School (PA), and principal and classroom teacher in the School District of Lancaster. A man of deep Christian faith, he was honored in 2019 for helping to integrate the Rockingham County School District in 1964, when, defying state law, he refused to turn away four Black children seeking enrollment at his school. Married to **Martha “Marti” Longenecker Towne Bender** for 16 years, he had three daughters.

Vonda Darlene Yeager Scott Kelso, class of '62, Chambersburg, Pa., died at age 84 on Nov. 30, 2024. She earned a bachelor's in education from Juniata College and a master's in counseling from Shippensburg University. In Pennsylvania, she taught at East Junior High School in Waynesboro, Central Junior High School in Chambersburg, and Franklin County

Vo-Tech. She was a member of Fourth Street Church of the Brethren and also attended both Chambersburg and Pleasant View Mennonite churches. The owner and operator of Farm House Craft Shoppe, she and her husband, Joe E. Kelso Sr., had three children.

Daniel D. Wert, D.O. '62, Lititz, Pa., died at age 85 on July 7, 2024. He graduated from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed a three-year anesthesia residency at Hershey Medical Center. He served as chairman of Community Anesthesia Associates of Lancaster for 16 years. After retiring from his career in osteopathic medicine, he made medical trips to Honduras to help women with painful varicose veins and to train anesthesia residents. He and his wife of 56 years, **Miriam Shank Wert**, had two children.

Dr. Jacob "J. Paul" Clymer '64, Lititz, Pa., died at age 86 on Nov. 30, 2024. A graduate of Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, he was a family physician in Mt. Union and Leola (PA). He was active in Otelia and Rossmore Mennonite churches and was recognized as "Landlord of the Year" by Tabor Community Services. He and his wife of 59 years, **Esther Wert Clymer '64**, had three children.

Raymond M. Martin '64, Lititz, Pa., died at age 88 on Feb. 6, 2023. A farmer, chicken processor, Mennonite Voluntary Service leader, pastor, lawn care worker, conference minister and bus driver, he touched lives in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. He and his wife of 66 years, Alice Good Martin, had three sons.

Carl Newswanger '64, Albany, Ore., died at the age of 82 on March 7, 2024. After graduating with an MDiv degree from Goshen Biblical Seminary, he pastored at Pueblo Mennonite Church in Colorado, at Mennonite churches in Illinois and Ohio, and at Salem Mennonite Church in Oregon, where he helped to found the Southeast Keizer Community Center. He developed a lifelong interest in singing Newfoundland folk songs and collecting postage stamps from the Canadian province after teaching at a school in Channel-Port aux Basques. He and his wife, **Louise Myers Newswanger '64**, had two children.

Esther M. Weaver '64, Lititz, Pa., died at age 89 on May 27, 2024. After earning an MSN from Vanderbilt University, she served as a volunteer nurse with Mennonite Central Committee Appalachia in Kentucky, nursing supervisor at LaJunta Hospital in Colorado, and nursing instructor at Reading Area Community College in Pennsylvania where she was a member of Akron Mennonite Church. In retirement, she crisscrossed the country in an RV with her sister.

Ernest Mark Hess '65, Lancaster, Pa., died at the age of 81 on July 15, 2024. He held three degrees and worked at Lancaster Mennonite School as a teacher, administrator, and guidance counselor. He was a member of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church. He and his wife, **Lois Myer Hess '65**, served for six years in Tanzania, Kenya, and Ethiopia with Eastern Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Central Committee. They also section-hiked the entire Appalachian Trail, the Jesus Trail in Israel, and the Camino de Santiago in Spain. The couple was married for 59 years and had two children, **Phil Hess '87** and **Audrey Hess '90**.

Geneva Emswiler Suter '65, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 87 on March 31, 2024. She retired in 1998 as microbiology supervisor

in the laboratory at Rockingham Memorial Hospital where she also taught in the School of Medical Technology for 30 years. She volunteered at the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Free Clinic from 1982 to 2019 and at Harrisonburg's Gift & Thrift from 1999 to 2019. She and her husband of 62 years, Jay Merlyn Suter, had one daughter.

Dwayne Dee Hartman '66, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 82 on Oct. 3, 2024. After graduating from EMC, he taught for several years at schools in Ohio and Pennsylvania, earning his teaching certificate in 1968. He found his career as the owner of Hartman Home Improvements, a business offering painting, wallpapering, siding, and window repair services. A lifelong lover of music, he sang with the Mennonite Hour Singers at EMC and Shenandoah Valley Choral Society for 10 years and also served as a song leader at Zion Mennonite Church in Birdsboro (PA), where he was a longtime member. Most recently a partner in ministry at New Beginnings Church in Harrisonburg, he and his wife of 54 years, **Dorothy Miller, class of '73**, had three children.

Sharon Kaye Kandel Yoder '66, Millersburg, Ohio, died at age 80 on March 17, 2025. She met and married **Cal Yoder '66** at EMC. After finishing their degrees in education, the couple moved to Twillingate, Newfoundland, Canada, where they served with Mennonite Central Committee in the Teachers Abroad Program for two years. She then taught for 32 years in Holmes County (OH) where she was an active member of Berlin Mennonite Church. She and her husband had three children.

Ernest S. Mast '67, Lancaster, Pa., died at age 83 on Oct. 7, 2024. After earning degrees from EMC and the University of Pennsylvania, he had a career in social work that included 10 years at Millersville Youth Village (formerly Mennonite Children's Home) and 23 years at Philhaven Hospital in Lebanon (PA). He served in various roles over 53 years at Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, including church chair, elder, Sunday school teacher, and song leader. He and his wife of 63 years, **Esther Baer Mast**, had three sons.

Carlton Stambaugh '67, Hanover, Pa., died at age 80 on Jan. 6, 2025. He served as a minister at Stony Brook Mennonite Church in York (PA), where he was a member, and recently attended Calvary Bible Church in Wrightsville (PA). He and his wife of 53 years, **Arlene M. Herr Stambaugh '69**, had three children.

David Leon Dowling '68, Knoxville, Tenn., died at age 82 on June 8, 2024. He served the educational, emotional and spiritual needs of young people and their families for 47 years as the founder of West End Academy, a private, PreK-12 school in Knoxville. Throughout his life, he was an active member of both Concord Mennonite Church and Trinity Chapel. He and his wife of 59 years, **Mary Ellen Maize Smucker Dowling, class of '62**, had three sons.

Percy Gerig '69, Lebanon, Ore., died at age 93 on Sept. 28, 2024. He met the love of his life, Lillian Jantzi, on the family farm near Albany (OR), and the two took it over after getting married in 1951. He sensed a call to the ministry in the 1960s and went on to pastor churches in Illinois, Oregon, and California. He and his wife of 71 years enjoyed traveling with their six children to Europe, China, and Israel. The couple visited Israel nine times, serving twice with Volunteers for Israel.



GRAD GOES TO GOSHEN

Dwight Gingerich '81, Kalona, Iowa, is the new athletic director and head men's basketball coach at Goshen College. He previously served at Hillcrest Academy (formerly Iowa Mennonite School) where he was principal from 2018 to 2025 and head boys' basketball coach from 1981 to 2000 and from 2001 to 2025. During his 43rd season in 2024-2025, he became the fourth all-time winningest high school basketball coach in Iowa history, amassing a 753-233 record with 12 state tournament appearances, four runner-up finishes, and a state championship in 1992. He also served as interim head men's basketball coach at Goshen from 2000-2001 and was named conference co-coach of the year.

Gingerich was inducted into the Iowa High School Basketball Hall of Fame in 2024 and received EMU's Alum of the Year Award in 2010. A health and physical education major at EMU, Gingerich played Royals' basketball and first coached the sport at Archbishop Carroll Catholic High School in DC—a then predominantly African American school—during his internship through the Washington Summer Service Year program. He credits EMU with helping to shape his coaching philosophy: "It's about developing people of character who love and want to follow Jesus." (Image courtesy of Goshen College.)



NUTRIENT-RICH COLLABORATION

Campus and community volunteers—457 in total—came together March 21-22 at Yoder Arena to assemble and box 113,400 MannaPack meals for hungry children around the world. The event was hosted by EMU Y-Serve in partnership with Harrisonburg's Tacos 4 Life restaurant and the nonprofit Feed My Starving Children (FMSC). Teams of volunteers scooped vitamin powder and dried vegetables, soy and rice into bags, which were then weighed for consistency, sealed, and packed into boxes for distribution to schools, orphanages, medical clinics and feeding centers in over 90 countries. For every meal sold at Tacos 4 Life locations, a portion of the proceeds is donated to FMSC to purchase the nutrient-rich MannaPacks. The event was part of a larger effort by the Arkansas-based chain to donate and pack 10 million meals by June 2025 in celebration of its 10th anniversary. (Photo by Macson McGuigan '17)



HARRISONBURG'S HISTORIC GREEN BOOK HOUSE

EMU history professor **Mark Metzler Sawin** is working with two JMU faculty members and JMU Libraries to uncover the history of the last remaining property listed in *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, a guide featuring businesses that welcomed Black travelers in the 1950s and '60s. The Ida Mae Francis Tourist House at 252 N. Mason Street in the city's Northeast neighborhood has witnessed eras dating back to the early 1900s as a successful woman-owned boarding house, a *Green Book* safe haven, and the lifelong home of siblings Henry and Lois Rouser. The house hosted prominent guests such as inventor George Washington Carver and members of the Duke Ellington and Count Basie bands. "This collaboration represents a significant milestone in uniting the Black community and two universities," said **Deanna Reed**, Harrisonburg mayor and director of alumni engagement and community connections at EMU. Her father, William Reed, inherited the house in 2022. (Photo by Steve Alderman/JMU)



HARVARD HACKATHON

Junior computer science major **Abraham Mekonnen** (pictured right) competed at HackHarvard 2024, which brought more than 500 undergraduate students from around the world to Harvard University in October to "collaborate and create innovative projects related to hardware, software, computer coding, and more." Mekonnen and his three teammates from Queens College in New York City won the "Best Use of Defang" prize for FootPrint Mayhem, a sustainability-focused platform that encouraged and rewarded users for minimizing their carbon footprint in creative ways through streaks, games, and points. Users could track their daily carbon footprint, take quizzes to learn eco-friendly habits, earn points and streaks for consistent actions, and compete with friends on a leaderboard. Defang is a tool used to develop, deploy, and debug hackathon projects. Founded in 2015, HackHarvard is a free, annual 36-hour collegiate coding competition hosted by Harvard students. (Photo courtesy of Abraham Mekonnen)

Marsha Jo Yoder, class of '69, Sarasota, Fla., died at age 80 on Jan. 30, 2024. She served as secretary at Sarasota Community Church, where she was also a member, and used her artistic talent to make crafts, wreaths, and memory books. She and her husband of 55 years, **Jerome Yoder '67**, had three sons.

Dorinne Clark Peratalo '70, Hibbing, Minn., died at age 77 on Jan. 24, 2025. She had a lifelong career in laboratory technology in Minnesota, serving as lab supervisor at the Littlefork Hospital before working at Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital for many years. At age 62, she earned a two-year degree in pharmacy technology and worked at the Deer River Health Care Pharmacy until she was 70. She was married to her longtime companion, Leonard Peratalo, from 1995 until his death in 2000.

Eileen Moyer Knechel '71, Harleysville, Pa., died at age 72 on Oct. 7, 2024. After serving as a secretary at EMC for two years, she worked for her father's business, Moyer's Chicks, and later became a part-owner with her two brothers. She and her husband, Jeryl M. Knechel, with whom she had two sons, embarked on various business ventures during their 43 years of marriage. A former member of Rocky Ridge Mennonite Church in Quakertown (PA) and Towamencin Mennonite Church in Kulpville (PA), she loved reading and studying the Bible.

Robert Wayne Mast SEM '74, Akron, N.Y., died at age 89 on Oct. 5, 2023. After witnessing his father's tragic death at age 13, he learned carpentry skills to help provide for his family. He worked as a skilled carpenter alongside his 40 years of service as a pastor in Canada and the United States—at Geiger Mennonite Church (ONT), Deep Creek Mennonite Church (VA), and Mount Pleasant Mennonite Church (VA), where he had attended as a child and where he and his wife of 64 years, Esther Troyer Mast, raised their three daughters. In retirement, he led a weekly Bible study at the Chesapeake City Jail for over 10 years.

Steven Ringenberg '74, Archbold, Ohio, died at age 75 on Sept. 26, 2024. After working at nursing homes in Elkhart (IN) and Hannibal (MS), he and his wife of 50 years, **Karen Lynne Swartz Ringenberg '74**, with whom he had two children, moved to Archbold (OH) where he began as executive director at Fairlawn Haven. He led the growth of the nursing home for 29 years, retiring as CEO in 2014. Named Archbold's Citizen of the Year in 2001, he was a devoted member of Zion Mennonite Church and served on several community boards.

J. Nelson Kling '75, Lancaster, Pa., died at age 73 on May 8, 2024. He found his passion serving seniors in various roles at Mennonite Homes Communities in Lancaster County. He attended Gingerich's and Landis Mennonite churches and was a founding member of Sacred Anthems Quartet. He and his wife of 48 years, Marie Forney Kling, had two children.

Peter Zucconi '75, Orrstown, Pa., died at age 71 on Jan. 5, 2023. He met his wife of 44 years, Mary Ann Landis Zucconi, with whom he had one daughter, while teaching at Greenwood Mennonite School (DE). He retired in 2014 after teaching for 36 years at Shalom Christian Academy in Chambersburg (PA). He was a member of Chambersburg Mennonite Church.

Donald C. Miller, class of '77, Goshen, Ind., died at 89 on Feb. 27, 2025. In his 28-year teaching career, he taught math at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School (PA), EMC, Broadway High School (VA), Westview High

School (IN), and Bethany Christian High School (IN). In 1994, he began a second career as a CNA at Greencroft Goshen, retiring in 2024 at age 88. An active member of Waterford Mennonite Church, he was married to Sylvia Steiner Miller for 63 years.

John E. Zook '77, Orrville, Pa., died at age 84 on March 5, 2025. He worked as a sales executive for several custom kitchen companies, retiring from Premier Custom Kitchens in 2009. In retirement, he drove a van for Orrville City Schools. A devoted member of Oak Grove Mennonite Church, he and his wife of 63 years, Velma J. Dillman Zook, with whom he had four children, served as missionaries in Kenya and Somalia through Eastern Mennonite Missions from 1969 to 1973. He later took part in short-term mission trips to Louisiana and Honduras with Mennonite Disaster Service.

Donna Hedrick Wolfe '78, Mount Jackson, Va., died at age 84 on Dec. 17, 2024. She and her husband of 63 years, James D. Wolfe, with whom she had two daughters, owned and operated grocery stores in the Valley for over 30 years. She also co-owned It's a Small World and Harrison House Art Gallery & Framery, both in Mt. Jackson, where she served as president of the Chamber of Commerce, helped to found the Open Door Food Pantry, taught aerobics classes to raise money for charity, was a member of Mt. Jackson United Methodist Church, and received numerous awards for her community contributions.

Anita Stalter '79, Goshen, Ind., died at age 77 on Dec. 10, 2024. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from EMC, where her husband, Jerold "Jerry" Lapp, taught in the art department. While teaching first grade full-time in Harrisonburg public schools, she earned a master's in education from JMU and developed and published international peacemaking curricula for children while attending Park View Mennonite Church. During her 28-year tenure at Goshen College, she served as a professor; chaired the education department; earned her doctoral degree in curriculum, teaching and educational policy from Michigan State; and in 2001 became the first woman to serve as academic dean. When she retired in 2015 as one of Goshen's longest-serving deans, the college president declared an "Anita Stalter Day." She and her daughter researched and wrote "More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Indiana Women." Her son is a multi-instrumentalist with the Virginia-based folk-rock band The Steel Wheels.

Lynn Fanning White '79, Staunton, Va., died at age 84 on Dec. 17, 2024. She served as an RN at Western State Hospital and was active in Happy Birthday America, The Salvation Army, Valley Mission, and Habitat for Humanity. A member of Memorial Baptist Church since 1975, she taught Sunday school, sang in the choir, and played in the "Sounds of Joy" handbell group. She and her husband, William Alan "Dick" White Sr., had four children.

Franklin Albrecht '80, Lancaster, Pa., died at age 66 on Aug. 24, 2024. An educator at heart, "Brother Frank" began his career teaching PE at New Danville Mennonite School from 1980 to 1982. At J.P. McCaskey High School, he founded the REACH program in 1987 and a peer mediation program in 1990, mediating over 2800 disputes during his eight-year tenure. At King Elementary, he implemented a mediation program and Peacemaker's Club, facilitating 2000 mediations over four years. He is a founding member of Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, served with Mennonite Central Committee to establish

mediation programs in public and private schools in Colombia, and produced bilingual radio shows on family peacebuilding. He and his wife of 32 years, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, had two daughters.

Anna Stutzman Janzen '81, Newport News, Va., died at age 74 on March 19, 2024. She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from EMC and pursued a master of arts in theological studies from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. In Newport News, she taught at Warwick River Christian School, was a youth minister at Warwick River Mennonite Church, and served as associate pastor at her lifelong congregation, Huntington Mennonite Church. She was married to Jay Milton Janzen for 28 years and had two stepchildren.

Christine Carol Good Shenk '83, Lancaster, Pa., died at age 62 on July 11, 2024. She began her career as an accountant and later owned Weaver's Hardware with her husband, **Edward Shenk '83**, with whom she had two daughters. She was certified as a spiritual director, Zentangle teacher, and mindfulness meditation teacher.

Terrence Troyer '83, Chesapeake, Va., died at age 64 on Sept. 26, 2024. He retired in 2024 as a master deputy sheriff from the Chesapeake Sheriff's Office. In later years, he was involved with Cornerstone Community Chapel, formerly Marlboro Mennonite Church, where he had been baptized as a young boy in Ohio. He was married to Wanra K. "Oy" Troyer for 16 years and had two stepdaughters.

Julie Ann Beauchamp Harber, class of '85, Clear Spring, Md., died at age 60 on May 16, 2024. Married to James Phillip Harber for 34 years, she earned a bachelor of arts in theology from Life Christian University and was a former member of Burning River Church in Dover (OH). Musically talented, she enjoyed singing gospel songs and playing the piano and keyboard for various congregations.

Lynette Yvonne Barnhart Crull '88, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 61 on May 14, 2024. She earned an MSN from UVA and was a licensed pediatric nurse practitioner in Virginia. Throughout her career, she worked in various fields of nursing, but her passion was caring for babies and young children. She and her husband of 33 years, David Lee Crull, had one daughter.

Cynthia Nisly '89, McMinnville, Ore., died at age 61 on Jan. 9, 2025. With a passion for helping others, she touched countless lives with kindness and wisdom through her practice, Being Well Counseling. She enjoyed cooking, entertaining, and spending time with family and friends.

Erica Joy Frederick Smith '90, Puebla, N.M., died at age 56 on Feb. 28, 2024. She graduated with a bachelor of science in nursing and worked as an RN on the orthopedic floor at Grandview Hospital in Sellersville (PA) where she was also a member of Perkasio Mennonite Church. On a trip to visit her parents in Mexico City, she became reacquainted with Joey Smith, a childhood sweetheart, friend, and doctor. During their 25-year marriage, the two ran a mobile medical clinic and continually sought ways to share the Gospel.

Steven L. Reiff '96, Ephrata, Pa., died at age 51 on April 6, 2024. He and his wife, Jennifer L. Richardson Reiff, with whom he had three sons, spent four years working at the Christian Academy in Tokyo. An agricultural engineer for the Lancaster County Conservation District, he was deeply committed to helping farmers

clean up local streams. He was part of the Petra Church community.

Sara Sanders Howlett MA '98 (counseling), Waynesboro, Va., died at age 78 on Oct. 14, 2024. She met her husband, Stephen Howlett, at the University of Florida's UF Health Shands Hospital while he was interning as a physician and she was working as a nurse. Upon moving to Waynesboro, she taught preschool for several years at First Baptist Church where she was also an active member. She then earned her master's in counseling and opened a private practice. In May 2012, she received the Waynesboro Rotary Club's Jean Harris Award for her work in establishing The Wayne Theatre.

Syed "Ali" Gohar MA '02 (conflict transformation), West Yorkshire, Great Britain, died at age 68 on Sept. 26, 2024. An internationally renowned social activist in restorative justice and the jirga system, he founded Just Peace Initiatives, authored several papers on the jirga system in Pakistan, and wrote two Pushto plays for Pakistan Television Corporation on HIV/AIDS, drug awareness, and domestic violence. He had one son.

Jodi Beasley Riddle '08, Harrisonburg, Va., died at age 64 on July 5, 2024. She worked as a teacher's assistant at Pleasant Valley Elementary School and later maintained special education records at the central office for Rockingham County Public Schools. She and her husband, Warren Nelson Riddle, a veteran, organized POW/MIA Recognition Day at JMU from 2004 to 2018. She continued the event in his honor until 2021.

Valerie C. Stoltzfus MA '08 (education), Lititz, Pa., died at the age of 70 on April 20, 2024. She had a fulfilling career as a special education consultant for the Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 and was a devoted member of Calvary Church in Lancaster, where she sang in the choir. She and her husband of 48 years, Elmer S. Stoltzfus, had two children.

Degree Key

CLASS OF - attended as part of the class of a given graduation year
GC - graduate certificate
MA - master of arts
MS - master of science
MSN - master of science in nursing
MDiv - master of divinity

Entries about alumni with both their undergraduate and graduate degrees from EMU are listed in the undergraduate section.

[Have an update?](#)

[Visit: emu.edu/alumni/update](https://www.emu.edu/alumni/update)

Editorial Policy

Milepost entries are printed on the basis of submissions from alumni or on the basis of publicly available information. We do not verify the accuracy of information that alumni provide. Nor do we make judgment calls on the desired information for publishing—beyond editing for clarity, conciseness and consistency of style. The information provided to us does not necessarily reflect the official policies of EMU or of its parent church, Mennonite Church USA.



MARCH FOR GAZA CEASEFIRE

Members of the EMU community—including students, faculty, staff and alumni—joined Mennonite Action's 135-mile "All God's Children March for a Ceasefire [in Gaza]" from Harrisonburg, Virginia, to Washington, DC, in July 2024. Between 35 and 125 marchers—aged 11 to 74—walked per day, anywhere from one to 11 days on a route through the Blue Ridge Mountains and suburban neighborhoods, and along country roads and highways. They sang hymns as they walked, braving the heat, humidity and rain. In DC, marchers joined an interfaith coalition protesting the annual Christians United for Israel (CUFI) conference and urged lawmakers to support a ceasefire to end the suffering in Gaza.

Senior nursing major **Jenna Weaver '25**, who visited Israel-Palestine on an intercultural trip in 2023, was a medic in the march. "The Hamas attacks that occurred in October and then the extreme violence by Israel stirred so much anger and sadness in me. How could I not stand up for tens of thousands of beautiful humans being killed when my faith calls me to do so?" **Tyler Goss**, director of student life and leadership development at EMU, also marched and coordinated programming that included "daily devotional-style gatherings to yoga, game nights and evening prayer." (Photo by Micaiah Landis)



PICKING UP STEM (SCHOLARSHIPS)

A \$2 million grant from the National Science Foundation will fund Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM) for 23 EMU undergraduate students, distributed across three cohorts over the next six years beginning in fall 2025. Open to academically talented first-year STEM majors with financial need, the grant provides up to \$15,000 per year for recipients, renewable for the duration of their degree. In addition to scholarships, the grant provides one-week paid "Bridge to College" experiences to help students prepare for college life, mentorship from STEM professionals, funding for embedded tutoring services and paid tutoring opportunities, place-based learning opportunities such as Park Woods (pictured), and eight-week paid internships. For details about eligibility and FAQs, visit: [emu.edu/stem/scholarship](https://www.emu.edu/stem/scholarship) (Photo by Rachel Holderman)



A ROYAL RECORD OF GOLDEN GENEROSITY

LovEMU Giving Day 2025 on April 2 set a Royal record—with **\$365,313** raised from 607 gifts by 372 unique donors, a nearly **\$25,000 (7 percent)** increase from last year's total. Dollars raised are helping to shape the futures of EMU students by decreasing financial barriers, supporting faculty and staff, and improving facilities.

In addition to the historic fundraising success, LovEMU featured spirited, on-campus events from morning until midnight. Returning to the schedule were a pep rally, Lunch & Lawn Party with egg toss, and cookout. New to the lineup were a panel discussion where EMU faculty shared their Royal tales, a "real-life" Mario Kart race, and President Huxman lookalike contest, which took place on the first of three spirit days that week.

EMU students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends also showed up online, unlocking all **\$152,000 in challenge match funds** for The University Fund, student scholarships, athletics, facilities, and intercultural programs. This year's "A Royal Tale" theme helped to inspire giving to write EMU's next chapter. "I'm so grateful to everyone who showed their support to make the event a success, and I look forward to **LovEMU Giving Day 2026 on Wednesday, April 1**," said LovEMU organizer **Nicole Litwiller '19, MA '20 (conflict transformation)**, annual giving and donor communications specialist at EMU.





EMU staff member and Herm's jester Tyler Goss, left, played dueling flutes with Makinto, revealing his hidden talent to an audience of over 450 at the end of the pep rally.



During a morning pep rally, EMU engineering major Adam Stoltzfus '25 debuted his Bazooka t-shirt cannon, designed with engineering lab tech Henry Bowser and funded by 2019 alumni Ben and Kayla Zook.



Gentle throws and soft catches were key in the egg toss contest during the Lunch & Lawn Party on Thomas Plaza. The team of junior Naomi Kratzer and Hannah Beck '24, undergraduate admissions counselor at EMU, won the contest.



Hundreds of faculty, staff, current and prospective students, alumni, donors, and families celebrate the funds flowing in at an evening cookout in the Student Union.



From left: Faculty members Dr. Gaurav Pathania, Dr. Benjamin Bergey '11, and Dr. Kate Clark '07 shared their journeys to EMU, challenges, what excites them about the future, and what they love most about EMU in a panel discussion in the Student Union.

EMU first-year student Francisco Rodriguez pushes sophomore Yan Cesar on a scooter around the indoor track while dodging yoga balls and other obstacles during the Mario Kart race. Their team, which included junior Dimas Portillo, won the race.



EMU students and staff modeled their blue outfits for the President Huxman lookalike contest, which also featured participants reciting their favorite "Huxmanisms." Junior Leah Beachy and Mana Acosta '25 (second and third from left, respectively) won; Beachy wore a bald cap to portray Dr. Huxman's husband, Jesse.

FIND YOUR **ROAR**

REGISTER TO VISIT

ROAR Sessions are open house events where you can explore our majors, athletics, student life, as well as meet current students—and Herm the Lion!

When you visit EMU's campus through the Admissions Office before Jan. 1, 2026, you'll unlock a \$1,000 visit grant, renewable for up to four years if you enroll. That's a total of \$4,000!

Visit emu.edu/visit or scan the QR code.

REGISTER NOW!



ROAR SESSION 1
OCTOBER 4, 2025

ROAR SESSION 2
NOVEMBER 8, 2025

ADMITTED STUDENT DAY 1
FEBRUARY 7, 2026

ADMITTED STUDENT DAY 2
MARCH 21, 2026

ADMITTED STUDENT DAY 3/LOVEMU DAY
APRIL 1, 2026

ROAR SESSION 3
APRIL 11, 2026

EMU PROMISE GRANT

Are you a student in Virginia whose family income is under \$65,000? You may qualify for free tuition.

Learn more at emu.edu/promise-grant



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

JESSICA KING

JESSICA (JESS) KING '96 has worked to bring the foundational lessons of her Mennonite upbringing and education to others during her more than 20-year career leading equity-driven public sector organizations—from creating economic opportunity to facilitating transparency in government to building journalistic literacy in communities. In recognition of her work, Eastern Mennonite University's Alumni Association and its Awards and Nominations Committee have selected King as the recipient of the 2025 Distinguished Service Award, which honors alumni who have significantly impacted the lives of others.

"It's an honor to be recognized by my alma mater," said King, who graduated from EMU with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts with minors in English, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and psychology.

SERVICE LIGHTS THE WAY

After graduation, King volunteered with Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service (PULSE), founded by EMU alumnus John Stahl-Wert '81. In an experience she likened to a post-graduate program, King joined a community of young leaders to partner with Pittsburgh nonprofits for a year of service and leadership. She served at the Thomas Merton Center, a Catholic-founded center for peace and justice, and was later hired as executive director of PULSE, where she spent four years expanding her understanding of urban communities and the local businesses, organizations, and governments that serve them.

King then led a six-year effort as founding executive director of the Union Project to transform an abandoned church building into an arts and enterprise incubator space. She spent more than a decade in Pittsburgh, where



COURTESY PHOTO

she met her husband, Chad. The couple has two daughters, Eleni and **Esmé** King Martin. Both Jessica and Esmé were greatly impacted by their intercultural studies at EMU; Jessica studied in Greece and lived with families in France and Côte d'Ivoire (West Africa), while Esmé, a rising junior at EMU, spent the spring 2025 semester in Guatemala and Mexico.

FOUNDATIONS IN COMMUNITY

King grew up Mennonite in Lancaster County. Her father was killed in a plane crash when she was two. After her mother remarried, her mother and stepfather started a paint store, where King and her three siblings all worked at different points.

"Growing up, my family had a robust network of support, and our church community was also an essential part of our local economy," King said. "Connections are important for a prosperous community."

King has intentionally lived in low-income neighborhoods for much of her adult life, creating relationships and solidarity that have informed her work and career path—from Pittsburgh

to Lancaster, where she fought poverty through entrepreneurship for seven years as executive director at ASSETS; ran for Pennsylvania's 11th Congressional District; and served four "eye-opening" years as chief of staff for the City of Lancaster.

"There's a narrative that our situations in life are based on our choices, but generational trauma and poverty, oppression based on race or gender, and access to quality education are huge factors. The rules of our economy are created by the wealthy and well-connected, creating systems of opportunity and disinvestment that are so much more than choice," said King.

She says that Jesus teaches us about economic issues more than many other Christian themes. "Loving our neighbors as ourselves includes examining and changing socioeconomic systems that support people," she said.

Since September 2023, King has served as inaugural executive director of The Steinman Institute for Civic Engagement in Lancaster. The nonprofit is focused on funding innovation in local news to support informed and engaged communities. It is also working "upstream from news" to build trust, center solutions, and equip action.

King says her recent work reminds her of the conflict transformation teachings at EMU, including those taught by John Paul Lederach.

"Change is possible," said King. "We can choose not to participate in the dystopian fears that can paralyze and isolate us. Values, teachings, and examples from EMU and the broader world provide guideposts and road maps to other ways forward."

— BY DAVID PULGAR

ALUM OF THE YEAR AWARD

FABRICE GUERRIER

**LOS ANGELES VISIONARY
ARTIST AND FUTURIST FABRICE
GUERRIER MA '15 (CONFLICT
TRANSFORMATION)**

has been selected by Eastern Mennonite University's Alumni Association and its Awards and Nomination Committee as the 2025 Alum of the Year for his work as founder and CEO of Syllble Studios (pronounced Syll-a-ble), the first collaborative worldbuilding production house for science fiction and fantasy storytelling.

"Being selected for this award feels quite unbelievable and affirms my work around collaborative worldbuilding," said Guerrier, who defines worldbuilding on his website (fabriceguerrier.com) as "the creation of intricate, plausible fictional universes often found in sci-fi, fantasy, and video games."

In collaborative worldbuilding, under-represented creators from diverse cultures come together to imagine and publish their shared stories.

A REFUGE OF BOOKS

Born and raised in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Guerrier immigrated with his family to Coral Springs, Florida, when he was 13. Already fluent in French and Haitian Creole, Guerrier learned English as his third language.

"It's kind of magic... being Haitian from an Afrocentric world... being from an island... being able to speak multiple languages," said Guerrier.

Nevertheless, Guerrier was an exile in a foreign country, forced to flee the 2004 Haitian coup d'état. He says while he "wanted to be an American," the more he tried to fit in, the more he felt like he was destroying a precious part of himself.

Guerrier found refuge at Northwest Regional Library, where he worked as a page, volunteered, helped with community programming, and explored everything from manga and comics to



PHOTO BY COLLIN RIGGINS

encyclopedias and films to non-fiction and sci-fi books. His curiosity sparked Syllble, an idea that was furthered while reading "Blindness," an essay in Jorge Luis Borges' "Seven Nights" collection, as a sophomore at Florida State University.

"I resonated with how Borges described being in a library as the closest thing to heaven, and how his blindness allowed him to see things in different ways. The impact of his words inspired me to become a writer," said Guerrier.

HEALING AND GROWTH

After graduating from Florida State in 2013 with a bachelor of science degree in international affairs and a leadership studies certificate, Guerrier decided to pursue a master of arts in conflict transformation from EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP).

As a graduate assistant at the Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice, he worked with its then-director and CJP professor, **Carl Stauffer MA '02 (conflict transformation)**, and conducted "humbling and eye-opening" field research on the impact of Fambul Tok International in

promoting reconciliation in communities after an 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone (West Africa).

"EMU was a place of healing for me," Guerrier said. "My peace studies showed me how personal and interpersonal work affects peace in the world."

Guerrier worked with CJP Professor Emeritus **Barry Hart MDiv '78** to explore theories and practices of Strategies for Trauma Awareness & Healing (STAR), and in 2014, he started a chapter of Coming To The Table (CTTT), a racial healing and reconciliation organization aimed at Taking America Beyond the Legacy of Enslavement—a program that began at CJP. Guerrier later served on CTTT's board of managers and became its youngest national president.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

After graduating from EMU in 2015, Guerrier worked on two novels, revising one to the point of exhaustion.

"It was probably one of the most painful and loneliest experiences I've ever had," he said.

Guerrier began researching collaborative writing techniques in Hollywood and beyond, which led him to invite three writers to his home to create a story together. The successful session set Syllble in motion.

Today, Syllble is enabling marginalized voices across the globe to conceive and tell the stories of their shared universes in order to disrupt modern-day inclinations toward disaster and doom.

"Imagining radically hopeful futures allows us to replace the realities imposed by capitalism and technology and media with something that's beautiful, nourishing, warm, and healing," said Guerrier. "It is how we reclaim what it means to be human."

— BY DAVID PULGAR

OUTSTANDING YOUNG ALUM AWARD

BRITTANY CAINE-CONLEY

AS ONE OF THE LEAD

ORGANIZERS FOR CONGREGATE
CHARLOTTESVILLE, BRITTANY
CAINE-CONLEY '14 (aka "Smash")

called for 1,000 clergy and faith leaders of all denominations to counter-protest a gathering of white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017. Her efforts denied white supremacists key locations that would have made their Unite the Right rally more visible, and later that year, she was honored by the National Council of Churches as a co-recipient of the President's Award for Excellence in Faithful Leadership.

Caine-Conley believes in the importance of connecting Christian communities with radical activists, using her pastoral presence as a bridge to form meaningful relationships between the church and social justice movements. She has been selected by EMU's Alumni Association as the 2025 Outstanding Young Alum. The award is given annually to an alum who, through professional achievement and/or Christ-like compassionate service, is making a significant contribution to the local, national or global community.

"I feel honored," said Caine-Conley. "As a queer, Christian woman called to serve in the clergy, the space hasn't always been welcoming. This award feels like an acknowledgement of my work and an affirmation for other queer folks who are serving the church and the kingdom of God."

THE SPACE BETWEEN

Caine-Conley learned to bridge the gap between communities at Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS), where she earned a master of divinity degree. Professor David Evans' Christianity through the Eyes of the American Outsider course impacted her deeply. Reading from the texts of enslaved people,

PHOTO BY HEATHER WILSON



Brittany Caine-Conley (pictured in white and purple in the front row) defends Charlottesville during the Unite the Right rally in August 2017.

Jewish individuals and queer Christians, she was able to explore the experiences of marginalized groups within Christianity.

In another course, Formation in God's Story with **Dawn Monger**, Caine-Conley's small group was challenged to think about life journeys and how they intersect with God's story.

"Our group considered how many loops, intersections, roadblocks, obstacles, and reversals we experience in our individual paths. The conversation led us to one word: mangled."

The "mangled" moment stuck with Caine-Conley, as did the seminary experiences of discussing theology over beers at Billy Jack's and sitting on the campus lawn learning about peacemaking from people across the globe.

Caine-Conley graduated from EMS in 2014, the same year she married her wife, Lindsay. The two met while working on the leadership team for RISE United Methodist Faith Community in Harrisonburg.

"My love for ministry was significantly shaped by RISE and its pastor, Amanda Miller Garber. There, I learned to yearn for beloved community, and now I seek to co-create such community wherever I go."

BAPTISM BY FIRE

In the summer of 2017, co-creating community in Charlottesville meant undergoing "baptism by fire."

"Everyone remembers that night on August 12, but there's so much that came before it... prayer and worship meetings, late-night strategizing, direct action training on nonviolence, even active shooter training. It was a lot," said Caine-Conley.

Through it all, she was focused on building bridges between communities that didn't want to interact with each other, between people—particularly white, progressive Christians—who had different ideas about what it meant to resist, from peacefully protesting to doing nothing.

To build greater understanding between progressive groups who desired change, Caine-Conley organized educational seminars and anti-racism training. She wrote various post-rally articles, and Congregate Charlottesville received national press coverage.

VOCATION AND COMMUNITY

Caine-Conley is now bringing her experience to the classroom at Denver's Iliff School of Theology where she is a PhD student in religious studies and adjunct instructor of Identity, Power, and Vocation in Community. A theme of the year-long course is understanding how individuals are shaped by histories, structures, systems, practices, and memories. She aims to create a "disruptive," yet caring, environment to help students become better ministers, leaders, and caregivers.

"I am inspired every day by people who allow the spirit to shake their assumptions, trajectories, and long-held orientations," said Caine-Conley. "It takes so much courage to allow the spirit to truly move us in new directions."

— BY DAVID PULGAR



ATHLETIC AWARDS

HALL OF HONOR

PHIL GUENGERICH

Phil Guengerich '70 was a staple at EMU sporting events between 2000 and 2013. His part-time position as athletic events coordinator turned into a full-time role responsible for ticket sales, concessions, game events, and some fundraising.

Guengerich graduated with a degree in elementary education from EMU, where he played on the soccer team and met his wife, **Susan Hess Guengerich '69**. He taught fifth grade at Linville-Edom Elementary School in Rockingham County, Virginia, for 30 years before returning to EMU.

"I came back because I loved working with young people, always enjoyed sports, and was familiar with EMU." He joined his father, **Paul T. Guengerich**, who worked part-time in alumni relations into his 90s after having served in various full-time capacities from 1964 to 1981. His mother, **Marjorie Yoder Guengerich '68**, earned a teaching degree from EMU. His three children—**Melani Guengerich Novinger '96**, **Gail Guengerich '98**, and **John Guengerich '01**—also graduated from EMU.

Guengerich used his experience in classroom management to train his staff of work-study students to run EMU events like a well-oiled machine—from setting up pre-game to slinging hot dogs and hamburgers in-game to doing laundry post-game. While he got to know staff members and assigned jobs accordingly, he expected students to "dress neatly, be courteous, prompt, and accepting of all people."

Guengerich managed some high-profile events at EMU, including multiple ODAC Championships and games during the 2003 women's basketball Sweet 16 run and 2010 Runnin' Royals Elite Eight berth, but says his best memories are the friendships he built with EMU Athletics personnel, work-study staff, student-athletes, and business owners who supported the university.

HALL OF HONOR

DAVID FALK

David Falk '15, a general studies major with a concentration in business, grew up in Madison, Virginia, where he had an impressive high school basketball career. He spent a postgraduate year playing at Hargrave Military Academy in Chatham, Virginia, before head men's basketball coach **Kirby Dean** recruited him to EMU.

As a 6-foot, 6-inch center, Falk played in 105 games with 56 starts, tallying 1,058 career points in four seasons with the Runnin' Royals. He was a two-time ODAC First Team honoree, earning the distinction in 2014 and 2015; he received VaSID All-State First Team honors those same two years. Falk also made the **D3hoops.com** All-South Region Third Team in 2014 and the **D3hoops.com** All-South Region Second Team in 2015.

At the time of his graduation, Falk held an EMU career record for blocks (214) and ranked third all-time in career rebounds with 952. Today, he still holds EMU records for most rebounds in a game (28 vs. Lynchburg on Feb. 28, 2014), most rebounds in a season (375 in 2013-2014), and most blocked shots in a season (82 in 2013-2014).

After learning life lessons from Coach Dean—including "having perspective" and "to always have faith in God"—Falk returned to Madison where he and his wife, Katelynn, live with their two children, Preslee (4) and McCoy (2), on a 2,000-acre farm focused on cattle, corn, and soybeans.



HALL OF HONOR

MITCHELL LEAP

Mitchell Leap '12, a health and physical education major, followed in the footsteps of his parents, **Bill '86 and Renee Kreider Leap '85**, and attended EMU after a successful soccer career at Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, a city he "always liked." His mother has worked in EMU's financial aid office since 1986. "I'd been around EMU all my life, and I thought it would be a good place to continue my education and play soccer."

During his four years as a forward under head men's soccer coach **Roger Mast**, Leap was a two-time All-ODAC honoree, earning the distinction as a sophomore in 2009 and as a senior in 2011. He received VaSID All-State First Team honors in 2011 and VaSID All-State Second Team honors in 2008 and 2009. One of the most prolific scorers in EMU men's soccer history, Leap ranks fourth all-time in the Royals' record book for career goals (35) and fifth for total points (80).

Leap looks back fondly on the tight-knit campus community at EMU. "There's value in attending a place where you feel like you know everybody and everybody knows you." His connection to EMU Men's Soccer continued after graduation: his brother, **Parker Leap '16**, also played forward for the Royals, and his cousin, **Justin Carey MBA '21**, has served as head coach since 2022.

Today, Leap lives in Lynchburg, Virginia, with his wife of nine years, Amber, and their three children—Rory (6), Rhema (3), and Mesa (1). He works in full-time ministry with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, serving as area representative for the City of Lynchburg and Amherst County.

HALL OF HONOR

JUSTIN REESOR

Justin Reesor '10 grew up in a Mennonite family in Stouffville, Ontario, Canada, where he played volleyball in middle and high school. His cousin, **Allan Reesor-McDowell '02**, played on the EMU men's volleyball team—and Reesor had traveled to see him play at a tournament in New York. His uncle, **Robert Reesor '89**, and sister, **Denise Reesor '07**, also attended EMU.

While visiting his sister, Reesor fell in love with the EMU campus and Harrisonburg. "I thought it was a beautiful area, and I liked the idea of a small college with smaller classes and easier access to professors." Reesor arrived in fall 2006 prioritizing academics and his social life, but after walking on during a scrimmage, he spent four years as a middle blocker on the EMU men's volleyball team under Coach **Steve Benson**.

Reesor made an immediate impact. In his first season, he was named the North East Collegiate Volleyball Association (NECVA) Western Conference Rookie of the Year and EMU Newcomer of the Year. He earned spots on the NECVA All-Western Division Second Team in 2009 and the NECVA All-Western First Team in 2010. At the time of his graduation, Reesor led the Royals in career blocks (462) and sets played (406), and ranked fifth in career kills (867).

While at EMU, Reesor majored in business administration and minored in accounting. He now serves as senior director of finance at Accumulus Synergy. He and his wife, **Rachel Mast Reesor '09**, have three children: Emma (10), June (7), and Charlie (4).

HOMECOMING 2025

October 10-12

Register by
October 1, 2025.

REGISTER HERE!



Friday, October 10

COMMON GROUNDS COFFEEHOUSE

7:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

REGISTRATION DESK

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT VISITATION

9 a.m.-5 p.m.

GOLDEN ALUMNI REGISTRATION & MIXER* (REUNION CLASSES 1975 & EARLIER)

10:30-11:15 a.m.

GOLDEN ALUMNI LUNCHEON* (REUNION CLASSES 1975 & EARLIER)

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

"A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE" CAMPUS TOUR*

2-3 p.m.

CLASS OF '65 & '70 REUNION*

2-4 p.m.

CLASS OF '75 50TH REUNION*

2-4 p.m.

CLASS OF '80 REUNION*

2-4 p.m.

ROYAL GALA OF GRATITUDE

(BY INVITE ONLY)

5-7 p.m.

A CAPPELLA COLLECTIVE*

7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 11

REGISTRATION DESK

7:30 a.m.-noon

BREAKFAST

7:30-9:30 a.m.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT VISITATION

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

COMMON GROUNDS COFFEEHOUSE

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

HOMECOMING KICKOFF CELEBRATION*

9-9:45 a.m.

HALL OF HONOR CEREMONY*

10-11 a.m.

EMU POP-UP SWAG SHOP

3-7 p.m.

BRUNCH

11 a.m.-1 p.m.

COLOR RUN

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

INTERIM PRESIDENT MEET-AND-GREET*

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

WOMEN'S SOCCER VS. SWEET BRIAR

Noon

SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI GATHERING*

Noon-1:30 p.m.

EVERY NATION CAMPUS (ENC) GATHERING*

Noon-1:30 p.m.

PLANETARIUM VIEWINGS*

12:30-1:15 p.m. & 1:15-2 p.m.

EMU WASHINGTON SEMESTER (WCSC/WSSY) 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION*

1-3 p.m.

EMU TENTALKS WITH ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS*

1:30-2:30 p.m.

Prepare to be impacted, influenced and inspired in this TED Talk-modeled event featuring the three 2025 alumni award winners speaking for 10 minutes each with a Q&A at the end.

MEN'S SOCCER VS. RANDOLPH

3 p.m.

ROYAL CITY CELEBRATION*

3-7 p.m.

Join EMU students, faculty and staff and friends old and new for entertainment, food trucks, and fun.

SAGE BIRD CIDERWORKS CLASS OF '95 REUNION*

4-6 p.m.

WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY VS. ROANOKE

6 p.m.

TURF FIELD BONFIRE (WEATHER AND CONDITIONS PERMITTING)

After field hockey game

CAPITAL ALE HOUSE HOCO "5'S & 0'S" AFTER-PARTY* (REUNION CLASSES 1985-2020)

8:30-10:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 12

HOMECOMING WORSHIP SERVICE

10 a.m.

**Registration required*

Livestream available on
Facebook and YouTube.



Schedule is subject to change.

emu.edu/homecoming



1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg VA 22802-2462

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Parents: If this is addressed to your son or daughter who has established a separate residence, please give us the new address. Call 540-432-4294 or email alumni@emu.edu.

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Progress Printing Plus

GIVE NOW!



Invest in yourself *AND OTHERS!*

Develop the skills and strategies to create meaningful change in your community and in the world. Explore our transformative graduate and professional programs, including:

- **NEW!** Doctor of Ministry in Peacemaking & Social Change
- Master of Business Administration
- MA in Conflict Transformation
- Restorative Justice in Education
- Biomedicine Graduate Program
- MA in Counseling
- MS in Nursing



GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

LEARN MORE
emu.edu/graduate

