

EKU College of STEM Welcomes Fall 2024 New Faculty



Some of the College of STEM's New Fall 2024 Faculty

Faculty play a major role in molding the student experience and are crucial to the success of Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). Accordingly, new faculty represent a sizable financial investment to the university. They are an important resource for a university, playing critical roles in the delivery of instruction, conducting scholarly activity, providing valuable service, and infusing fresh ideas and perspectives into the professoriate.

As we kick off the 2024-2025 academic year, we are excited to welcome 15 new full-time faculty members to the College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (CSTEM)! Each of these talented individuals brings a wealth of knowledge, diverse experiences, and innovative ideas that will enrich our academic community.

The new Game Changers who have joined our team in pursuit of CSTEM's vision of *Transforming lives through excellence in STEM disciplines* include:

Department of Agriculture: Dr. Prosanta Kumar Dash

Department of Biological Sciences: Dr. Katelyn "Kate" Jones, and Dr. Kendall Simpson

Department of Chemistry and Forensic Science: Dr. Padam Acharya

Department of Computer Science and Information Technology: Mr. Nathan Arnold, and Dr. Eun Mi Kim

Department of Engineering and Technology: Dr. Sergio Sgro

Department of Mathematics and Statistics: Mr. John "Patrick" Cain, Dr. Joshua Qualls, Dr. Himali-dilrukshani Don-Gammanpila, Dr. Christopher Hogan, Mts. Ada "Christy" Ricket, and Mr. Ryan Whaley

Department of Physics, Geosciences, and Astronomy: Dr. Keri Dixon, and Dr. Mohammadreza Zakeri

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to our new colleagues as we look forward to an exciting and productive semester ahead and continued growth!

PLACES AND PROGRAMS

Introducing EKU's Newest Natural Area: Cardinal Lane Outdoor Laboratory



EKU Students Enjoy an Outdoor Class at the Cardinal Lane Natural Area

In the fall of 2023, Eastern Kentucky University's Division of Natural Areas (DNA) expanded with the addition of the Cardinal Lane Outdoor Laboratory, a ten-acre property located adjacent to the Richmond campus as a fourth natural area. This new site is part of the DNA's ongoing commitment to enhancing environmental quality and creating accessible green spaces for the campus and community. The other three natural areas managed by DNA include Lilley Cornett Woods Appalachian Ecological Research Station Located in Letcher County, Maywoods

Environmental and Educational Laboratory which straddles parts of Garrard and Rockcastle Counties, and Taylor Fork Ecological Area located near ECU's main campus in Richmond.

Plans for Cardinal Lane include working with students to develop skills in natural resource management, including the removal of invasive species, improving plant diversity and water quality, managing the urban forest, and implementing a variety of restoration projects. The site is also managed to ensure safety and accessibility, creating a welcoming space while promoting ecological stewardship in an urban environment.

Cardinal Lane provides opportunities for education, community engagement, and environmental stewardship, all aligned with the mission of the Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment. Last spring with the help of ECU students and AmeriCorps members, we began transforming the area into a community green space by establishing a vegetable garden and a pollinator garden. These initiatives not only aim to enhance food security on campus and in the local community, but also serve as educational tools, offering hands-on experience in gardening and native plant cultivation.

This fall, thanks to a generous grant from the Kentucky Division of Forestry, we will be establishing a native tree nursery and a fruit tree orchard at Cardinal Lane. ECU students will receive specialized training in urban and community forestry practices, preparing them for careers in this vital and growing field.

Cardinal Lane is more than just a natural area – it is a unique blend of innovative land management, community involvement, and student education. Beginning next year, we will host community workshops on topics such as urban gardening, stream buffer management, rain barrel usage, and invasive species management.

The DNA's vision extends beyond traditional ecological restoration. According to Dr. Kelly Watson, the associate director of Natural Areas, "We are partnering with faculty and students from disciplines across campus, including agriculture, early childhood education, nutrition, recreation and park administration, public health, and anthropology, to create a dynamic space for learning." Planned projects include the development of a nature playscape, using the gardens to provide fresh produce to Colonel's Cupboard, and transforming Cardinal Lane into an outdoor classroom for ECU students in a diversity of programs. This urban field site will serve as a living laboratory, providing students with hands-on experience in community leadership, agroforestry, permaculture, and environmental education.

Cardinal Lane represents an exciting opportunity for both ECU and the community. As we continue to develop this space, we look forward to furthering our mission of ecological stewardship and education while creating a vibrant, sustainable resource for future generations.

If you are interested in getting involved with work at Cardinal Lane, please reach out to us at naturalareas@eku.edu.

Horticulture Club's Annual Poinsettia Sale

Mark your calendars! The Annual Poinsettia Sale at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) returns on December 2nd, kicking off the holiday season with vibrant blooms and a tradition that dates to the late 1970s. This event is hosted by the Horticulture Club and was originally launched by Dr. Steve Black, a retired Floriculture professor, who continues to teach Floral Design classes each semester.

In the early days, Dr. Black nurtured just 500 poinsettias, managing every aspect of their growth himself. He kept these festive plants alive year-round, allowing them to flourish into small shrubs during the summer. These specimens served as the foundation for each year's crop, ready to be purchased by the community after the Thanksgiving break.



The Poinsettias During the Growing Season

In March 2006, Mr. John Duvall, was hired as a Horticulture Technician by the ECU Department of Agriculture and began training under Dr. Black, "I learned the meticulous processes that have been refined over decades to produce top-quality Christmas flowers. While we still honor some of the traditional methods, we've adapted our approach by ordering pre-rooted cuttings, making it easier to bring a range of stunning poinsettia varieties to our sale. Popular cultivars like Prestige Red, Jingle Bells, and Marble Star remain staples, while each year we strive to introduce a new novelty color that captures the spotlight," Mr. Duvall said.

The annual Poinsettia Sale has become a highly anticipated community event. Despite rising costs over the years, the Horticulture Club has managed to keep the price of the poinsettias affordable, increasing only four dollars in nearly two decades.



This Year's Beautiful Poinsettia Harvest

Thanks to the overwhelming support from our community, the Horticulture Program flourished, expanding its offerings over the past eight years. It now hosts a fall mum sale, a vibrant spring plant sale, as well as a bustling farmer's market on campus, and most recently, a pansy sale to brighten up the cold winter landscape.

The proceeds of the sales pay for the various educational and social activities the Horticulture club hosts each year such as pumpkin carving and caramel apple making. In addition, the funds are also used to cover club members' travel expenses when they attend the National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC). This competition hosts students from over 60 colleges and universities from all over the nation and has them compete in a wide variety of events including hands-on equipment operation, plant identification, and business development. According to Mr. Duvall, "The NCLC is an industry conference that allows our students to compete on a national level as well as giving them the opportunity to network with their peers. Last

year the club spent over \$8000 dollars on this trip and our students only had to cover the cost of a few meals.”

More information can be found about these sales and other information concerning the Horticulture club by visiting the Facebook page by searching “EKU Horticulture Program.” Or by emailing Mr. Duvall directly at john.duvall@eku.edu.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Ms. Emmaline Kleinman



Ms. Emmaline Kleinman

Ms. Emmaline Kleinman was born in Montana but moved to Louisville, Kentucky when she was very young. She grew up with her mom, dad, an older sister, a younger sister, and two dogs.

“I knew I wanted to stay in the state to utilize state scholarships. The high school I went to in Louisville is very big, so I knew I wanted to go to one of the larger schools in Kentucky. I did not want to stay in Louisville, so I looked for a school far enough away to not live at home but close enough that I could go back if I needed to. My older sister also went to EKU, and it was very exciting to go to college with her for a couple of years.”

Ms. Kleinman is pursuing a B.S. in biomedical sciences with a pre-optometry concentration and minors in chemistry and physics. She is currently the president of the Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) Archery Club, a member of Student Government Association’s (SGA) Inclusive Excellence and Engaging Issues Cabinet, and a member of the Pre-Professional Health Society. She is also an active member of her church. She added, “I like to do everything outside from backpacking to rock climbing and I play piano.”

Ms. Kleinman was a Governor's Scholar in High school, and as such earned the Governor’s Scholar Regent scholarship at EKU. She also received scholarships due to winning archery tournaments while in high school. Additionally, she has been on the dean’s list every semester during her time at EKU.

Ms. Kleinman has also worked in the Dean’s Office for the college of STEM for 2 years as a student worker. When asked about Emmaline, Ms. Sarah Adams said, “Emmaline has been a wonderful addition to the STEM Dean’s office. We will certainly miss her when she graduates, but we are excited to see what her future holds.”

When asked what she has learned the most at EKU, Ms. Kleinman said “I have grown up a lot since being at EKU. I have learned a lot about myself, I solidified what career I want to pursue and learned more about who I am and the kind of person that I want to be.” She is planning to graduate in May 2025 and is currently in the application and interview process for optometry school, which will start in Fall 2025.

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

Mr. Ashley Ward



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“Our son, Christopher, transferred to ECU and found great professors in the Computer Science Department who really challenged him academically. ECU helped Christopher obtain an internship at Lexmark which he then turned into his first job out of college.” -Mr. Ashley Ward.

Mr. Ashley W. Ward is a partner at the law firm of Stites and Harbison, PLLC in Lexington and has been with the firm since 1986. He is a litigator who primarily defends doctors, nurses, and hospitals in medical negligence lawsuits. In those cases, he spends considerable time talking with medical professionals, analyzing medical records, and formulating legal strategies. “I have tried numerous cases to verdict which has led to me being named a fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers,” he said.

Prior to private practice, Mr. Ward was a law clerk for US District Court Judge Scott Reed. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Kentucky (UK) in 1981, graduating Phi Beta Kappa, and a juris doctorate degree from the same institution in 1984.

Mr. Ward’s first exposure to the College of Science (precursor to the College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) was as a parent. His son, Christopher, transferred to Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) after spending his first two years at UK. He became a computer science major at ECU where he felt welcomed and included.

“My son, Christopher, transferred to ECU and found great professors in the Computer Science Department who really challenged him academically. ECU helped Christopher obtain an internship at Lexmark which he then turned into his first job out of college. Christopher is now a network system engineer for the Kentucky Department of Revenue. I could tell our son felt at home at ECU and he made the most of the opportunities they provided to him. He worked as a tutor and as a counselor at the summer computer camp the department would sponsor every summer,” Mr. Ward said.

A current member of ECU’s Board of Regents, Mr. Ward has been engaged with ECU for many years, as he explained, “I am proud to have been appointed to the ECU Board of Regents by Governor Andy Beshear. My wife, Julie, is a Richmond native and a graduate of Model Lab School. I attended many ECU football games with Julie’s family. After the positive experience our son had at ECU, I wanted to find a way to support and promote ECU. In addition to my service on the Board, I am pleased to make financial contributions specifically to the computer science department so they can keep up the good work.”

When asked what advice he would give to current students aspiring to go into law, Mr. Ward responded, “For success in any major in college, you need to develop strong study habits. Being willing to work hard is a skill that will take you a long way. You also need to develop critical thinking skills. Don’t just



Mr. Ashley Ward with his son Mr. Christopher Ward

memorize the material or just do what is required. Don't be afraid to ask "why" when learning a new concept. Also, work on the soft skills of interpersonal relations and communicating effectively in person. If you want to be a lawyer, you will need to be prepared to read and write a lot."

Mr. Ward was born in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, and graduated from Highlands High School. In addition to their son, Christopher, Mr. Ward and his wife have a daughter, Chloe, who teaches social studies at Lafayette High School in Lexington. Chloe has also taken some graduate courses at ECU working towards her principalship certificate.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall Commencement: Friday, December 6th, 2024, 9:00 am
EKU Center for the Arts

EKU Thanksgiving Break: November 27th-29th, 2024