

# EKU Establishes a College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics



**Dr. Tom Otieno, Dean**

Dear alumni and friends,

As a strategy to enhance college-level structures to better position Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) to prioritize academic excellence, student success, and institutional distinction, the university formed the College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (CSTEM) effective July 1, 2021. In announcing this development EKU President, Dr. David T. McFaddin, stated that “The new college will strengthen our programs in STEM and ensure alignment of fiscal and faculty resources in this vital area.”

I am honored to have been named the dean of this new college and I look forward to working with the various stakeholders as we pursue the great opportunities that the launch of the college presents for EKU.

We will build upon the existing strengths of the people, places, and programs of the units within the college to establish and sustain a supportive environment, that values diversity and

inclusion, where students, faculty, and staff can excel.

We have outstanding faculty who are committed to student success through excellent instruction and other high impact practices such as undergraduate research; dedicated staff willing to support our students in every way possible; students who are eager to learn and perform at their highest potential; and involved alumni and friends determined to enhance the educational experience of our students.

Places where instructional activities are conducted enhance the learning experience. Our Science Building provides state-of-the-art laboratory and instructional spaces well suited for engaged and transformative learning and cutting-edge research. The Meadowbrook Farm provides students and visitors with a unique opportunity for hands-on experiences and to observe agricultural applications involving livestock and forage crops. Our natural areas at Lilley Cornett Woods, Maywoods, and Taylor Fork Ecological Area provide unparalleled outdoor facilities for environmental research and education. EKU's flight training operations at the Central Kentucky Regional Airport enables us to train the best and safest professional pilots, and the most forward-thinking managers coming out of academia today.

When all is said and done, students expect academic programs that meet their needs and prepare them for their chosen career. The College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics offers a broad range of degree programs in STEM areas including agriculture, aviation, animal and veterinary science, biology, biomedical sciences, chemistry, computer information systems, computer science, construction management, cyber systems technology, data science and statistics, digital forensics &

cybersecurity, forensic science, engineering technology management, environmental and applied geology, mathematics, physics, and wildlife management. The College also offers pre-professional programs in engineering, optometry, pharmacy, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, and physician assistant.

The support of alumni and friends is invaluable to the college as we strive to enhance the educational experiences of our students. One of my goals as dean is to facilitate communication and engagement with our alumni and friends. This quarterly newsletter is one way of sharing with you some of our highlights. I welcome you to communicate with us and let us know how you are doing, visit with us to take part in our events or to inspire our faculty and students by sharing your experiences, and give back through philanthropy.

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of our students!

Dr. Tom Otieno, Dean



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## PLACES AND PROGRAMS

### Stateland Dairy at Meadowbrook Farm



**Stateland Dairy at Meadowbrook Farm.**

Eastern Kentucky University's (EKU) Meadowbrook Farm, located just a 15-minute drive from the Richmond campus, provides a unique hands-on learning environment and teaching laboratory for the Department of Agriculture and also provides outreach to the community. This 720-acre facility boasts state of the art beef, dairy, sheep, swine, and crop production units.

One of the most impressive enterprises on the farm is Stateland Dairy. The dairy was founded in 1912 and was originally housed on the main campus right off Kit Carson Drive. It moved to its current location on Meadowbrook Farm in 1996. The large red barn on the farm, which houses the dairy, boasts spacious free

access stalls with water beds for the cows, a drive-through feed alley, and a robotic milker that allows cows to choose when they are milked, and other things that enrich the well-being of the cows such as large rolling brushes for their natural desire to rub/scratch themselves, and cooling misters they can stand in when it is hot outside.

The EKU farm manager, Mr. Chad Powers, works with faculty and industry professionals to keep the herd at the forefront of quality. Indeed, Stateland Dairy has some of the highest ranked genetics (for

Holstein and Brown Swiss breeds of cows) in the state and regularly receives awards at the state and national levels for both milk production and milk quality. “This year our dairy herd ranked as one of the top University/College herds in the nation as recognized by the Holstein Association (USA), earning 6th place in the southeast region. Also this year, ECU had the opportunity to exhibit *Eastern Goliath Payva*, a cow bred and raised at ECU’s Stateland Dairy, at the Kentucky National Dairy Show and Sale in Louisville, KY. *Eastern Goliath Payva* was awarded Grand Champion Brown Swiss and sold for \$11,000, a rare accomplishment for a university. Accomplishments like these are only possible thanks to the amazing ECU farm staff and working relationships with partners in the dairy industry,” said Dr. Jessica Kenealy, assistant professor in the Department of Agriculture.

Prior to 2018, cows at Stateland Dairy were milked by hand twice daily in a traditional milking parlor by students and staff. In 2018, ECU and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund worked to acquire and install a state-of-the-art robotic milker. “The robotic milker reduces labor costs, increases productivity, and improves the cows’ well-being. The milker runs 24/7, allowing cows to be milked at their leisure with little to no human



**Robotic milking technology at Stateland Dairy.**

intervention. This decreases their stress, reduces the risk of infection, and increases their comfort. It also frees student workers from twice-daily milking routines and allows them to acquire more experience in precision dairy management,” explained Dr. Kenealy.

Each cow is fitted with an electronic ID collar which communicates with the robot’s computer system. When the cow enters the milking platform, the robot automatically cleans the udder and connects the milking cups to the teats. Every time a cow is milked by the robot over 140 data points are generated including information on milk quantity and quality, cow health, and cow behavior.

Once milking is complete, the robot detaches from the teats, cleans the udder again, and out walks a happy, comfortable cow. Robotic milking has revolutionized the dairy industry, allowing cows to choose when they are milked which has led to cows milking themselves more often (3+ times per day) and producing more milk per cow, all while improving cow comfort. This means the cows like being milked, they are better at managing themselves, there are more opportunities for student learning, and there is increased output for the farm.





**Students visit Stateland Dairy as part of their academic classwork.**

Students still work hands-on with cows daily, but now have an additional set of tools to monitor herd health, assess and adjust nutritional requirements, track milk quality and production, learn and implement recent management advancements, and spend more time with the herd to identify individual cow needs. This experiential learning provides our students with a solid foundation in dairy technology and management, preparing them for a career in an ever-adapting industry.

"Stateland Dairy has provided me with countless memories and hands-on learning opportunities. I have been able

to make lifelong connections with the farm, farm staff, and even a favorite cow or two which I have watched grow and develop in the herd over several years. In my opinion, the education that is offered through Stateland Dairy is irreplaceable for any agriculture career path," said Ms. Mae Hammond, recent graduate from the Animal Science, B.S. degree program.

The dairy herd has for years been known as a herd with top-quality genetics for Holstein and Brown Swiss breeds of cows. Each breed provides unique characteristics to the final milk product. For example, whereas a single Holstein cow can provide a large quantity of milk, over 24,000 pounds per year, the Brown Swiss breed provides milk with a higher protein and fat content.

All milk products produced in the dairy are sold to Borden Dairy Company in London, Kentucky and the profits are reinvested in the farm.

If you would like to visit Meadowbrook Farm and Stateland Dairy, contact the Department of Agriculture by email at [agriculture@eku.edu](mailto:agriculture@eku.edu) or by calling 859-622-2228.

## **B.S. Degree in Aviation**



**Student logging flight hours.**

Eastern Kentucky University's (EKU) Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation is the only program of its kind in Kentucky. The Aviation program was started in 1983 and has evolved into one of the best programs in the country. The B.S. degree in Aviation provides three concentrations to meet the needs of the aviation industry: Professional Flight, Aerospace Management, and Aerospace Technology.

The Professional Flight concentration prepares students to become commercial pilots. Students graduating with this concentration are prepared to fly aircraft for the traditional airlines, private corporations, charter services, rescue operations, cargo, flight instruction and many other flight related areas. Students receive Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certifications as a private pilot, instrument pilot, commercial pilot and instructor pilot on single and multi-engine aircrafts. In addition to becoming an exceptional pilot, professional flight students gain additional knowledge in multiple areas of aviation organizational leadership to better prepare them for flying careers in the aerospace industry.

Eastern Kentucky University meets the rigorous requirements set by the FAA and has been certified as a Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 141 Institution of Higher Learning. The flight training program was also awarded the coveted FAA 1,000 Hour Restricted Airline Transport Pilot (R-ATP) certification. This certification allows graduates from EKU to serve as a co-pilot on a commercial airline with 1000 flight hours instead of the 1500 hours as required by the FAA. This is due to the program being designated by the FAA as a FAR Part 141 program and meeting additional education requirements. "Receiving this certification is a huge accomplishment in the industry. Our program had to meet the stringent requirements set forth by the FAA," said Mr. Dennis Sinnett, Executive Director of the Aviation Program.

The Central Kentucky Regional Airport is located just 15 minutes south of campus and is the home of EKU's flight training operations. EKU also manages the airport and serves as the Fixed Base Operator (FBO). "Having the Central Kentucky Regional Airport as our Fixed Base Operation helps students because it allows us to reduce fees associated with the program. These savings can then be passed down to our students reducing the overall cost of flight training," commented Mr. Jason Bonham, Airport Manager. The FBO and airport also serve as a "learning lab" for students in the Aviation program. Students have the opportunity to work at the airport to learn about the daily operations and what is involved in running a general aviation airport.



**Central Kentucky Regional Airport, home of EKU's Aviation Program.**

State Government recognized the importance of the EKU Aviation program and provided funding to support the purchase of aircraft as well as the construction of a flight training center/terminal building at the Central Kentucky Regional Airport. "This funding will allow EKU to take the aviation program to the next level and become part of the national conversation on aviation education," said Mr. Sinnett. With these funds, EKU now has 27 aircraft in the fleet and is in the process of finalizing construction plans for the flight training center/terminal building.



**Students using 2D/Virtual Reality professional flight simulator.**

Along with the aircraft and airport resources, the program also boasts three flight simulator laboratories located in the Whalin Complex. The Alsim 200MC and the Professional Flight Controls (PFC) DCM-MAX flight simulators can

simulate up to 15 different kinds of aircraft types as well as glass cockpit technology which shows flight data on Electronic Flight Displays rather than on separate gauges for each instrument. These simulators are approved FAA advanced aviation training devices (AATD) that can be used to log flight time for students and also provide currency training for pilots in the aviation community. The EKU Aviation program is also on the cutting-edge in-flight simulation training with the development of a 2D/Virtual Reality (VR) professional flight simulation lab. This lab contains state-of-the-art VR technology that is only available in a small number of university-based aviation programs in the United States. “The VR flight simulation lab will provide an opportunity for our students to experience flight training in a less stressful and more controlled environment,” said Mr. James Glass, EKU Aviation Instructor.

The EKU Aviation program is also working with selected high schools and community colleges in the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) designated areas on increasing aviation education awareness. EKU has partnered with these schools to provide a virtual reality simulator unit at each location to expose students to cutting edge technology in aviation and encourage them to pursue a career in aviation. In 2021 alone, there is a need for 27,000 new pilots and over the next 20 years it is projected that there will be a need for more than 800,000 pilots and 1.2 million support personnel in the aviation industry. The EKU Aviation program is an excellent career path for anyone interested in aviation and aerospace industries.

The Aerospace Management concentration is for students who would like to pursue a career in the aeronautical industry, but do not want to become a professional pilot. The Aerospace Management concentration prepares students for careers at airports, airlines, corporate aviation, and government agencies such as the FAA, National Air and Space Administration (NASA) and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) with hands-on training in operations, scheduling and dispatch for management professionals. Management graduates work in aviation marketing, public relations, human resources, safety and security at the local, national and international level. They also have the opportunity to receive certification as an AAAE Certified Member (AAAE CM) through the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE).

The Aerospace Technology Concentration is designed specifically for students who have completed a two-year associate degree in an aviation related field and wish to pursue a four-year bachelor’s degree.



This concentration is also designed to be offered on-campus or online throughout Kentucky and the United States.

For more information about the Aviation program, please visit <http://aviation.eku.edu/>

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## FACULTY/STAFF AND STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

### Mrs. Holly Rabnott



**Mrs. Holly Rabnott**

Mrs. Holly Rabnott, senior office associate for the Department of Biological Sciences and the Division of Natural Areas, is from southeastern Ohio, near Ohio University. She (and her identical twin) graduated from Federal Hocking High School in Stewart, Ohio.

She first moved to Kentucky when she chose to attend Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in biology. Mrs. Rabnott says, "I initially wanted to go to vet school. I worked a myriad of jobs after graduating, ranging from retail to filing slides part-time in the pathology department at the University of Kentucky (UK), to managing undergraduate biology labs at UK's biology department, to an AmeriCorps VISTA year at Berea College, where eventually I found my way to EKU."

Mrs. Rabnott started her career at EKU in the College of Education's Student Success Office, working as an administrative assistant. This position allowed her to work with education majors where she assisted in scheduling advising

appointments, graduation-related appointments, and general advising information to students.

In July 2018, she became an office associate for the Department of Biological Sciences and Department of Geosciences. She enjoyed working with the chairs of both departments, Dr. Malcolm Frisbie, and Dr. Melissa Dieckmann. "What I like most about EKU is also what I like most about my job - the PEOPLE!" Dr. Frisbie commented, "Everyone loves Holly. She always has a warm smile and she brings a can-do attitude to the office. She gets things done and keeps all of us on track."

When the Department of Geosciences merged with the Department of Physics and Astronomy in July 2021, Mrs. Rabnott was reassigned to split responsibilities between the Department of Biological Sciences and the Division of Natural Areas.

Mrs. Rabnott enjoys working closely with graduate students and student workers in the Department of Biological Sciences. The department has a Peer Mentoring Center that provides student-led tutoring for students taking biology and wildlife classes. She makes sure the center is staffed with outstanding

student tutors and remarked, “I have been inspired by the student tutors that have come through the center in the past three years. They made the best of tutoring during Covid by offering sessions via Zoom, Facebook, and Skype.” Mrs. Rabnott is also an ECU alumnus, having completed her Master of Arts degree in Student Personnel Services in Higher Education in 2020. Her future career goals include securing a position in academic advising.

Mrs. Rabnott is married to Justin, who works as a network engineer in Lexington. They have two cats, Yoda and Wiley. Earlier in 2021, the couple volunteered with the college student ministry at their church where they worked with many ECU students. They also enjoy traveling, especially to Australia, where Justin’s family lives. In Richmond, they can be found spending time at Lake Reba or getting coffee at Purdy’s.

### **Mr. Kyle Wesley**



**Mr. Kyle Wesley**

Mr. Kyle Wesley was born just outside of Dayton, Ohio, but moved to Lexington, Kentucky, when he was two years old and has been in Kentucky ever since. He is pursuing a B.S. in Homeland Security and a B.S. in Geographic Information Science (GIS). He is also pursuing a certificate in Intelligence Studies with Concentrations in Data Collection as well as Threat Specialist.

The Homeland Security majors are required to take GEO 353, an Introduction to GIS class. “I had Dr. Huffman as my professor, and he helped me fall in love with Geographic Information Science. I loved doing all the labs and seeing my finished maps. I had plenty of credits from classes in high school, so I decided to go ahead and add GIS as a second major hoping to combine my passion for national security with my love of GIS,” said Mr. Wesley.

Mr. Wesley knew that he wanted to stay in the state of Kentucky near family. He also knew that in-state tuition was less expensive than out-of-state, but the real draw to ECU was the

Homeland Security program. He commented, “Growing up I had always been the most engaged and successful in science and social studies but did not know what I wanted to do with it. I had a friend who told me about the kind of stuff they did at his technical school during our senior year of high school. I was fascinated by the idea of the intelligence process and national security. With ECU having one of the best Homeland Security programs in the nation and it being so close to home, it was a no-brainer.” He is a Regents Scholarship recipient and a Battelle-ECU Science Scholar this summer. He was on the Dean's List for six semesters and has received the President's Award five out of six semesters.

Mr. Wesley was an intern for Natural Areas during the summer of 2021 where he used Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) to aid with wetlands identification in Daniel Boone National Forest. He is also a 'Trees' intern for ECU, working with other students and Dr. David Brown, professor in the Department



of Biological Sciences, in completing a tree inventory of our campus. He is currently working on a research project with Dr. Kelly Watson, associate professor in the Department of Physics, Geosciences, and Astronomy and Associate Director of the Division of Natural Areas using LiDAR in an attempt to identify old growth forests in Lilley Cornett Woods.

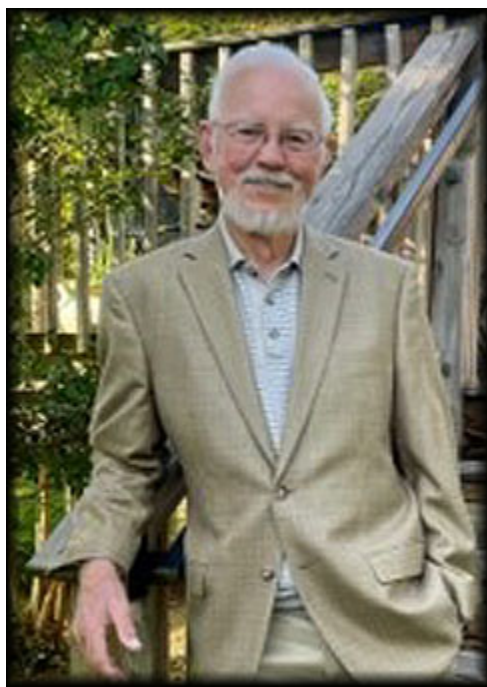
When asked what he has learned while attending ECU, Mr. Wesley said “I have learned that your education is what you want to get out of it. This idea was expressed to me by Dr. Huffman, Dr. DeLucia, Dr. Watson, and Dr. Cabaniss who have all shaped me as a student. Professors are here to help you learn. Whenever there is a subject or an idea that I come across that I feel would be beneficial to my future, I ask my professor. The Geoscience professors specifically leave space in the syllabus for extra topics and at the beginning of the semester ask if there is anything specific you want to learn. Getting good grades in classes does not guarantee you know the material and will be successful. Learning the material and asking questions is more important than getting an A. We all pay to be here and to be taught; get the most out of it while you can.”

Mr. Wesley's long-term goal is to work for the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency as an Intelligence Analyst. To get there he hopes to find a job to gain professional experience using Geographic Information Systems right after graduation. When not in class or doing research, he enjoys hiking, video games, bowling, and spending time with friends.

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## ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

### Dr. Samuel D. Blair



**Dr. Samuel D. Blair**

*“What I remember best about ECU was my relationship with individual professors, not just the chemistry faculty but the faculty in all my classes! Their approachability, friendliness, and willingness to provide support or advice when I needed it left a lasting impression.”* Dr. Samuel D. Blair

Dr. Samuel D. Blair was born in Whitesburg, Letcher County, Kentucky and attended Whitesburg High School (now merged as Letcher County Central H.S.). He graduated from Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) with a B.S. degree in chemistry in 1965. He also holds M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in analytical chemistry from The Ohio State University (OSU).

His matriculation at, and graduation from, ECU was not without drama. His family lacked the finances to pay for college, so he decided to sit out a year and work. He worked as a handyman ‘tool dresser’ for a drilling company that he previously worked for during summer vacations from high school. By the end of the year, he saved sufficient funds to pay for one year at ECU, a

school he chose due to its proximity to his hometown, the cost, and prior exposure through an uncle & aunt who were alumni.

His first year turned out to be less than stellar. Dr. Blair explains, “Lacking maturity, I treated that first year of college like an extension of high school and allowed my educational pursuits to come second to my partying activities. I did finish the year and managed to avoid probation – barely.” Even though he lacked sufficient credits to register as a sophomore, he decided to register for the following fall term. However, after much introspection, he decided to withdraw from the University.

Before he left campus, he was contacted by the dean of students, Mr. W.J. Moore, to discuss his decision to withdraw from ECU. During this meeting, Dean Moore had revealed to Dr. Blair that his father had contacted him seeking his support in keeping his son enrolled in college. Dr. Blair recalls, “Dean Moore said that my dad had offered his assurance that he ‘would find the money necessary to continue my education’ if the dean was satisfied that I had the capability and desire to continue. After a very candid discussion of my ‘freshman immaturity’, Dean Moore assured me that, if I had truly shed my ‘childish ways’, financial assistance could be arranged.”

Dr. Blair was overwhelmed that his dad was willing to go out on a limb for him and that the dean was offering him financial assistance. He declined the offer commenting, “I just wasn’t ready for college.”

He returned home and went back to work for the same drilling company for which he previously worked. A few months later, through the assistance of a nurse friend named Helen Ogelvie, Dr. Blair was able to enter a training program and eventually work as a clinical (hospital) laboratory technician. He remarked, “I later married Helen and we jointly decided that our future could be much improved if I had a college degree.” Unlike his first year at ECU five years earlier, Dr. Blair had matured and was ready to focus on doing what was necessary to complete a degree. He re-enrolled at ECU and decided to major in chemistry. While he was going to school, his wife worked at Pattie A. Clay Hospital (now Baptist Health, Richmond) and was the primary bread winner. “I crammed every course I could take into a schedule. This enabled me to go through a 4-year curriculum in three years. I was a Dean’s List student every year thereafter and graduated with ‘Highest Distinction’ in 1965,” said Dr. Blair.

Dr. Blair’s fondest memories of ECU include the many hours he and Helen spent wandering the paths of the ‘Campus Beautiful’ and attending the occasional game or event with a group of Brockton (married student housing) friends and neighbors. Most of all, he cherished the connections he made with his professors. “What I remember best about ECU was my relationship with individual professors, not just the chemistry faculty but the faculty in all my classes! Their approachability, friendliness, and willingness to provide support or advice when I needed it left a lasting impression.”

He was especially grateful for the mentoring and friendship he received from Professor Meredith Cox. Even though he interviewed with and was offered multiple entry-level chemistry positions, Professor Cox suggested that he attend graduate school. “I had taken the G.R.E. but had not seriously considered pursuing an advanced degree. I was interested enough to heed Professor Cox’s advice,” he recalled. He did some research and eventually applied for admission to three graduate schools. Before reaching a decision, not only on which school to attend but whether or not he wanted to continue his education, he received a letter of acceptance to The Ohio State University Graduate School – a school to which he had not applied. “I found out that Professor Cox decided not only that I should attend graduate school but

that I should attend OSU. Professor Cox's reach and influence at OSU earned me a letter of acceptance. I was thoroughly impressed," he remembered. He accepted OSU's offer of an assistantship and entered its graduate school in the fall of 1965.

To incoming students, Dr. Blair offers the following advice, "Research your chosen field and stay abreast of options open to you as you progress through matriculation. Don't be hesitant to alter your plan as you gain knowledge - most students do! Once you have a solid plan in place, be willing to work to achieve your objectives. Don't hesitate to seek help when you need it - everyone does at some time. Never stop learning!"

Dr. Blair received his Ph.D. degree in 1968 and accepted a position as a research chemist with International Business Machines (IBM) at their Development Laboratory in Lexington, Kentucky. He spent the next 26 years working for IBM in various capacities from development assignments to production management of printing supplies on a worldwide scale, including managing and directing the technical arm of IBM's Office Products Division/Chemical Products.

He retired from IBM in 1994 but remains professionally active, as he explains, "I consider myself fortunate to have experienced and viewed firsthand the many changes that occurred in the printing industry over my career span. The education and experience gained in managing large scale processes and organizations led to post-retirement opportunities and ventures over the ensuing years. I served as a technical and business consultant to multiple companies, taught university level chemistry courses, managed and partnered with an entrepreneurial company utilizing ozone to treat/reuse formerly wasted chilling water in the food processing industry. And I have never stopped learning!"

Dr. Blair remains engaged with his alma mater (EKU) 56 years after graduation. Most notably, he has been the vice chair of the Dean's Development Cabinet for the College of Science. The group played a major role in the college's recognition of its first three iconic professors. "I was pleased to participate in Professor Cox's well-deserved recognition as an iconic professor by EKU's College of Science," he said.

Dr. Blair's wife passed away from cancer in 2007, but he will never forget the wonderful times they spent together and the role she played in his educational and career successes. "Helen pretty much convinced me to restart my education. From that point and for the next six years, she worked as a nurse, and a good one. She easily found employment wherever we chose to locate allowing me to become a fulltime student. As wife/partner in my education, Helen deserved at least 50% credit for 'our' degrees. Her name may not be on the parchments but without her support, it is unlikely that EKU would have happened for me."

Dr. Blair and his wife were blessed with two daughters, Melanie and Jennifer. His daughters live in Lexington, Kentucky.



## Dr. Jaleh Rezaie



**Dr. Jaleh Rezaie**

*“Don’t lose site of the fact that you are here to teach, advise and mentor your students.” Dr. Jaleh Rezaie*

Dr. Jaleh Rezaie is a three-time Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) alumna with a B.S. degree in mathematics (1981), an M.S. degree in Mathematical Sciences (1983), and a B.S. degree in Computer Science (1986).

Born in Isfahan, Iran, Dr. Rezaie’s association with ECU began in 1980 when she joined the institution as an undergraduate student. While working on her first degree, she received the International Students Merit Scholarship. “This scholarship made the difference between leaving school and staying to finish my degree,” she said.

Dr. Rezaie was first hired at ECU as a Visiting Instructor in the Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science in 1983. She rose through the ranks to become professor in 2004. While serving as a full-time faculty member at ECU, she was encouraged and supported by the department chair (the late Dr.

Charles Franke) to pursue further studies in Computer Science. The department had a rapidly expanding computer science program with a faculty consisting solely of mathematicians who had retrained into computer science. They were very good and knowledgeable teachers, but the department badly needed someone with academic qualifications in computer science. Dr. Franke saw this as a “grow your own” project. Dr. Rezaie ended up with three degrees in computer science, a B.S. from ECU, and an M.S. and a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky.

Dr. Rezaie held a number of administrative positions during her tenure at ECU including interim chair of the Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, founding chair of the Department of Computer Science, associate dean of Graduate Education and Research, and director of STEM-H Institute.

Asked what she considers her greatest job satisfaction or achievements at ECU, Dr. Rezaie said, “Establishment of the Computer Science department, creating the M.S. degree program in computer science, reaccreditation of the Computer Science program, establishing the Computer Science (Robotic) summer camps, creating the Graduate School’s first Strategic Plan, establishing the STEM-H Institute, chairing the committee that created the 2006-2010 university Strategic Plan, and chairing the University SACS-COC reaffirmation committee (2004 -2007).”

Dr. Rezaie taught a variety of courses at ECU from introductory level Mathematics courses to graduate level Computer Science courses.

Dr. Rezaie offers the following advice to students aspiring to major in mathematics or computer science, “Mathematics and Computer Science are not easy programs, so more than anything else, you need to

believe in yourself and your abilities, work hard and don't get intimidated (watch out for Imposter Syndrome). This is especially true for female students. Most importantly, don't forget to have fun (safely) and make great memories while you are working on your degree."

Her counsel to new faculty beginning their career at ECU is, "Don't lose site of the fact that you are here to teach, advise and mentor your students."

Dr. Rezaie retired from ECU in August 2015 after 32 years of service. She currently serves as the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies at North Carolina Central University. She lives in Durham, North Carolina, with her husband, Dr. Hossein Vaez. They have two grown children, Ali who is married, lives in Melbourne Australia, and heads the sales division of a software company; and Allia who is in her third year of medical school.

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