



CPE REPORT

Eastern Kentucky University News for the Council on Postsecondary Education



EKU AND ANTHEM BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD ANNOUNCE CONTINUATION OF ANTHEM RURAL MEDICINE SCHOLARSHIP

Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) and Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Kentucky recently announced a continuation of their work together to grow the number of frontline healthcare workers in the eastern region of the state, increase access to care and improve health outcomes for more Kentuckians. The Anthem Rural Medicine Scholarship is a fellowship for graduate students, building upon the four-year partnership between Anthem and EKU to support students seeking higher levels of medical education.

Anthem committed an additional \$100,000 to the scholarship endowment, increasing the total investment at EKU to nearly \$400,000 since the establishment of the partnership in 2021. This expansion not only enriches EKU's health science program, but also empowers students to provide care in underserved, rural communities. Including this year's three recipients, 16 EKU students have been awarded the Anthem Rural Medicine Scholarship.

"We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Anthem to offer students educational opportunities through the Anthem Rural Medicine Scholarship," said EKU President David McFaddin. "The impact of the Anthem Rural Medicine Scholarship cannot be overstated.

The initiative improves college access and affordability as well as brings more local providers to Eastern Kentucky."

According to the Kentucky Hospital Association's 2024 Workforce Survey Report, Kentucky hospitals reported more than 8,000 vacancies across 14 professional groups in 2024. Nursing topped the list with 16.5% of all nursing positions unfilled. Staffing shortages, coupled with the state's high prevalence of multiple chronic conditions, reinforce the need to expand the healthcare workforce in the Commonwealth.

State Representative Deanna Frazier Gordon (R-KY) said, "As a proud Colonel alumna, Anthem's ongoing support and investment in EKU's health science program and its students is extraordinary. Healthcare education ensures not only access for the future but job security for so many young people. It's an exciting time to watch our community grow and for Eastern Kentuckians to get the healthcare they deserve."

The recipients of the 2025 Anthem Rural Medicine Scholarship are Christa Ann Carlin, Chassidy Paige Keeton and Morgan Elizabeth Hamilton.



EKU'S CLASSROOM IN A BOX INITIATIVE SUPPORTS FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS

Eastern Kentucky University's College of Education and Applied Human Sciences (CEAHS) launched an innovative initiative to support graduates as they embark on their teaching careers. "Classroom in a Box" provides essential classroom supplies to new teachers, many of whom are the first in their families to graduate from college.

The Kentucky Department of Education's School Report Card reported a 22.5% teacher turnover rate for the 2023-24 school year. Recognizing the financial strain often faced by first-year educators, EKU aims to eliminate the barriers encountered when beginning a career in the field and further address the ongoing teacher shortage.

"Across the U.S., teachers spend about \$250 annually on supplies for their students," said Dr. Elizabeth Smith, dean of the College of Education and Applied Human Sciences. "With the help of College staff, faculty, alumni and friends, our future teachers will enter their classrooms with a head start on the supplies needed to support their students. Our graduates are highly prepared and ready to teach on day one—and now they have the supplies they need that first day, too!"

The program provides a box of classroom essentials, such as pencils, pens, markers and notebooks, given to new teachers when they graduate from EKU. For the December 2024 graduates, 27 education majors received a supply box, each accompanied by a heartfelt note from the donor who made it possible. With approximately 150 education graduates expected in the spring, CEAHS in collaboration with University Development and Alumni Engagement continues fundraising efforts to meet the demand.

STUDENTS TAKE THEIR RESEARCH TO HARVARD, REPRESENTING EKU AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In January, Eastern Kentucky University students traveled to Harvard University and presented their research at the National Collegiate Research Conference (NCRC). This marked the second time students from EKU attended the conference, following recommendations from faculty mentors.

Students from more than 100 universities worldwide participated in the conference. The NCRC aims to build a cohesive undergraduate research community and encourage students to engage in research early in their careers—making significant contributions to all fields of study.

"This allowed me to connect with talented undergraduate students from across the country," said Kylee Phillips, an EKU student from Belfry, Kentucky. "This was my first time flying and presenting my research to an audience, which made this a very memorable experience for me."

Phillips' research focuses on comparing E.coli identification methods. After attending the NCRC, Phillips said she looks forward to continuing her research as she prepares to pursue a career as a physician in rural Kentucky.

"I want to ensure that communities like mine have access to cutting-edge medical tools and services, from faster diagnostics to more accessible healthcare services," she said.

The following EKU students presented their research at this year's NCRC:

- Isabella Bailey-Sims, biomedical sciences major
- Selicity Broadbudds, pre-physical therapy major
- Kyle Miller, pre-physical therapy major
- Toluwanimi Olatoye, health services administration major
- Kylee Phillips, biomedical sciences major
- Demi Watson, psychology major

