

Campus Update

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Campus holds official ribbon cutting for Dan Hays STEM Center



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1920s

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“The 1920s: A Centenary Retrospective,” served as a follow-up to last fall’s successful “Vietnam (is not): 50” event, featuring an even wider array of departments and disciplines.

Throughout the day, ECU faculty shared their perspectives on the 1920s through a series of sessions examining the decade’s political, cultural, artistic, scientific and social developments.

The morning sessions featured presentations by Dr. Brad Clampitt (History) on presidential personalities and policy, Dr. Ken Hada (English and Languages) on Langston Hughes and “The Other America,” and Dr. Karen Williams (Physical Sciences) on women in the sciences during the 1920s.

The next round of sessions included Dr. Houston Mount (History) discussing the decade’s impact on film, Dr. Sarah Peters (VP of Academic Affairs) examining Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and the creation of Jazz Age celebrity, and Dr. Mara Sukholutskaya (Global Education) exploring Russia in the 1920s.

Later sessions continued the wide-ranging examination of the decade. Dr. Jennifer McMahon (English and Languages) presented on Heidegger and time, while Dr. Christine Pappas (Politics, Law and Society) discussed landmark Supreme Court cases of the 1920s and Prof. Melina Rodrigo (Art, Design, Media & Communication) explored the development of Art Deco.



In the afternoon, Sarah Engel and Susan Ingram (Art, Design, Media & Communication) presented on Ada in the 1920s, Dr. Andrew Wells (Mathematics and Computer Science) discussed changes in the foundations of mathematics, and Dr. Chris Bean (History) examined the events leading to the stock market crash.

The day’s programming continued with a screening of the National Theatre’s 2016 production of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill’s *The Threepenny Opera*, originally written in 1928.

The evening then featured a 1920s jazz performance directed by Dr. Nathaniel Berman (Music), followed by ECU’s annual Rothbaum Constitution Day lecture.

Dr. Felix Harcourt, Associate Professor of History at Austin College, presented “Outlawry in Oklahoma: The Ku Klux Klan and the Constitution in the 1920s,” concluding the day’s programming with an examination of the constitution and how it pertained to the social, cultural and political impact of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s.

Similar to “Vietnam (is not): 50,” the event drew strong attendance throughout the day from students, staff, faculty and community members, with many attendees returning for multiple presentations. Held in the Estep Multimedia Center, the event’s continuously high turnout reflected the campus and community’s enthusiasm for such events.

1920s

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East Central University's Director of Bands and Percussion, Dr. Nick Meyers, has been credited for the arrangement of the opening track for Jeff Klemm's newest album, "I've Got Heart."

"This new album is packed with a lot of great music," said Meyers. "I am honored to be part of this album. I arranged the instrumental parts for the opening title track 'I've Got Heart.' Jeff Klemm wanted the sound of a marching band to go along with both him and the children singing on the track."

Dr. Ken Hada performs spoken word alongside contemporary chamber music

East Central University professor and Oklahoma poet, Dr. Ken Hada, was a featured speaker for, "Chatter: Music Worth Talking About," alongside composer and songwriter, Akshaya Avril Tucker.

Performing in Santa Fe, New Mexico on Saturday and in Albuquerque on Sunday, both to sold out crowds, Hada read from his newest publication, *Nexus*, with Avril Tucker presenting the world premiere of *That Amber Glow for Cello and Wind Octet*. Also featured were performances of *Wind Octet No. 3 (1778)* and *Mozart's Serenade No. 12 for Winds in C minor*.

ECU School of Business scholar leaders have spent time this semester at the Oak Hill Golf & Country Club learning the ins-and-outs of golf etiquette with Dr. Stacey Bolin, Director of the Business and Scholar Program.



The ECU School of Business offered a special thank you to Derick Bowers, Trevor Sutton and Matthew Meyer for stepping up to assist the scholar leaders master their skills.

HAYS

From Page 1

In 1909, Chickasaw Citizen Dan Hays donated 16 acres of his land to help establish a new teacher-training institution in Ada. The institution, East Central State Normal School, would eventually become East Central University.

More than a century later, ECU is honoring Hays' foundational gift with the opening of the Dan Hays STEM Center, a 64,000-square-foot facility designed to expand opportunities in science, technology, mathematics and health care while preparing students for the workforce of the future.

Named for ECU's first patron and donor, the center represents both a connection to the university's earliest days and a significant investment in its future.

Located at the corner of N. Francis Avenue and E. 9th Street, the Dan Hays STEM Center brings together academic spaces for the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science and an expanded School of Nursing. The facility provides new classrooms, laboratories, simulation spaces and areas for student collaboration and study.



Dr. Tawfik and Siham Ramadan pose with family for a photo outside the Dan Hays STEM Center after touring The Ramadan Student Health Services Clinic inside the Center.



The project represents a major investment in ECU's academic facilities and in the workforce needs of Oklahoma. In 2023, ECU received \$7 million in state funding associated with the American Rescue Plan Act to support expansion of its School of Nursing. That funding became an important component of

the plans for the new facility.

Additional support came through the ECU Forward Capital Campaign, which launched as the Dan Hays STEM Center project was taking shape. Donors to the campaign contributed \$3.3 million toward the \$41 million project, helping ECU invest in students, faculty, academic programs and

and facilities.

In November 2025, the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust approved a \$13 million Legacy Grant to ECU to help complete the project.

Numerous individuals, businesses and organizations also contributed to the effort, helping make the new center possible. Naming opportunities remain available for interested donors.

Groundbreaking for the Dan Hays STEM Center took place in June 2024. Just over two years later, the School of Nursing and the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science moved from Science Hall, the university's oldest building, constructed in 1910, into their new home in time for the fall 2026 semester.

The difference is more than a new address.

The center provides flexible dry laboratory spaces that support interdisciplinary science and mathematics education, along with active-learning classrooms designed to expand and enhance existing STEM programs.

For nursing students, the building offers high- and medium-fidelity simulation laboratories

with advanced technology and media-capture capabilities. The spaces allow students to practice responding to realistic medical situations through interactive manikins and immersive simulations, providing opportunities to develop clinical skills in an environment designed to mirror real-world health care settings.

Classrooms are located throughout both floors of the building, while the simulation laboratories occupy a dedicated suite on the second floor. Academic and program spaces are organized around a central common

area on the first floor, with additional gathering, study and work areas near the west-facing entrance on both floors.

The second floor also provides access to a covered outdoor balcony, offering additional space for students and employees to study, collaborate and gather.

The center's design also connects the future of ECU to its history.

Throughout the building, artwork and other design elements recognize Dan Hays' Chickasaw heritage and the longstanding relationship between

ECU and the Chickasaw Nation. A large metalwork tiger sculpture, created by Choctaw artist Jane Semple Umstead, is prominently displayed between the first and second floors.

The result is a facility designed not only to support new approaches to teaching and learning, but also to reflect the history of the university and the community it serves.

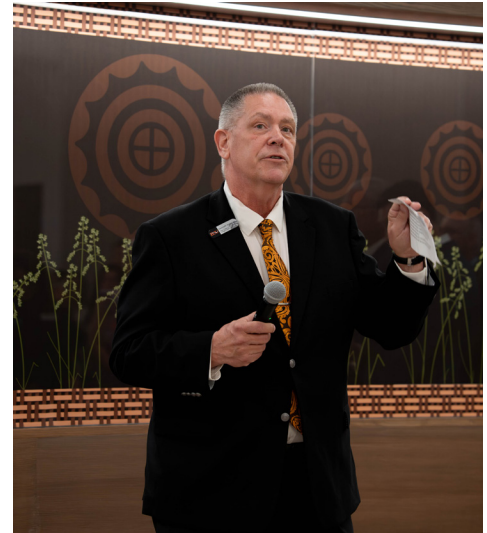
When Hays donated his land in 1909, the institution that would become ECU was only beginning. East Central State Normal School was

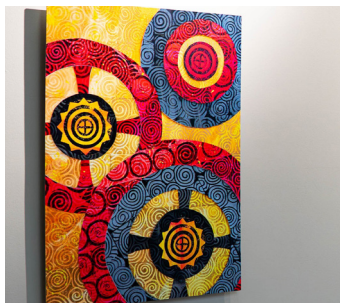
created to prepare teachers for Oklahoma, but its mission would grow along with the state and the needs of its students.

More than a century later, ECU continues that tradition of growth and service.

The Dan Hays STEM Center now stands on the campus that grew from Hays' original gift, connecting the university's earliest history with its next generation of students, educators, scientists, mathematicians, computer scientists and health care professionals.







Research.com ranks ECU programs among the best

Five programs at East Central University were ranked among the 2027 Best in Oklahoma by Research.com.

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Bachelor of Science in Accounting
- Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice
- Bachelor of Science in Social Work
- Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation and Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Each year, Research.com publishes rankings of the best U.S. colleges that provide their students with the most beneficial combination of affordability and quality of education. The ranking includes 1700+ institutions that were selected from more than 6000 institutions based on a detailed analysis of more than 400 metrics from credible sources such as IPEDS and College Scorecard, and evaluated using a unique entropy method.

East Central University Honors Program Sorting Hat Ceremony



New Legal Studies certificate available at ECU

The Department of Politics, Law, and Society at East Central University announced the addition of the Certificate in Legal Studies to their academic program offerings. Designed to meet the needs of working professionals and students, this certificate provides an opportunity to develop and credential foundational legal knowledge and skills.

To complete the Certificate, students will complete five courses: Introduction to Law, Legal Research and Writing I and II, Civil Procedure, and Legal Systems Applications. These courses are offered in-person on the ECU campus in Ada. For more information, visit ecok.edu/news.

ECU Nursing students experience right-of-passage with traditional White Coat ceremony



ECU's Student Government presented Pieces of Peace for International Peace Day 2026 by making mini lego sets and friendship bracelet materials available for students to stop by for a fun and relaxing activity.

“Step Out of the Darkness” prayer march returns



Sponsored by the Brandon Whitten Institute for Addiction and Recovery at East Central University, “Step Out of the Darkness” is an annual prayer march held to shed light on truths about drug addiction and dependency.



A prevention and recovery rally, along with information booths, food, and a talent show, also took place following the march. This year's event saw hundreds of attendees march from the Pontotoc County Court House to the ECU campus.

Once Upon a Princess Party experience put together by ECU Showtime



Tigerpalooza filled Koi Ishto Stadium with hundreds of attendees, as well as participants from Class 2A through 6A high school bands from across the state.

The event was originally organized in 2010 in memory of Bron Warren. Proceeds from the marching band contest fund scholarships for members of the Pride of Tigerland marching band. The event and scholarship's namesake, Hugh Bronson “Bron” Warren III, was a 2007 ECU graduate and a talented multi-instrumentalist.

WATERS

From Page 1

Award-Winning documentary screened in Estep

East Central University's Department of Art, Design, Media & Communication and the ECU Cultural Activities Committee presented a screening of the award-winning short documentary, *Tiger*, by Oklahoma filmmaker, Loren Waters.

Tiger chronicles the decades-long journey of Indigenous artist Dana Tiger and her family. From the success of the Tiger family business during the 1980s to its near collapse, the film explores resilience, grief and hardship as the family works to revive its iconic Tiger t-shirt.

The film was directed by Waters (Cherokee/Kiowa), an Oklahoma filmmaker and founder of Waters Media whose work includes directing, producing and casting. Waters has been named to Forbes' 30 Under 30 and Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces and currently serves as executive director of the Lindy Waters III Foundation. Her film and television credits include work on *The Lowdown*, *Reservation Dogs* and *Fancy Dance* as an extras casting director.

Waters' work has been showcased at major film festivals including Sundance, SXSW and Hot Docs. *Tiger*, an Academy Award-qualifying short documentary, received the Short Film Special Jury Award for Directing at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival.

Students and community fill Centennial Plaza for Grounded, ECU's annual chalk art festival



Student editors announced for 70th edition of "Originals"

Four student editors were named for the 2027 edition of East Central University's literary journal, "Originals," at the annual Originals Open-Mic event, held inside the Linscheid Library with several dozen students and community members in attendance.

Dr. Joshua Grasso announced Shelby Ensey of Roff, Addison Guinn of Purcell, Kris Marc of Maud and Aidan McCallum of Wynnewood as this year's editors, as well as the rules and guidelines for submission to the journal.



Stickball returns to the lawn at East Central University, organized by the Native American Student Association (NASA)



Organized by Gamma Delta Pi and the Native American Student Association, Orange Shirt Day served as an informational event to honor and remember Indigenous children who were forced to attend residential boarding schools, including those who never returned home.

Computer Science Faculty and Former White House Official at the Obama Presidential Center

By Rusty Pickens; ECU Computer Science Instructor (Remote)

On June 18 I stood with campaign and administration colleagues in Chicago as Barack and Michelle Obama dedicated the Obama Presidential Center. As we spent the day reflecting on the work we've done and what remains to do, my mind kept going back to Ada where it all started for me.

I learned to write code at East Central University, taught by faculty like Bill Walker, who believed a student from Stonewall could build things that matter and compete with any technologist in the world. That belief and the strong community of support are the reasons I had a career to build at all.

The foundation East Central University gave me carried me a long way: training under Chickasaw Nation Ambassador Charles Blackwell at the Nation's offices on Capitol Hill, and then eight years of public service in the Obama Administration at the White House and the U.S. Department of State, building the digital platforms a presidency and a responsive government depend on.

The Center now houses the next chapter of our community's work: preparing and empowering the students who will take up the mantle of positive change. Standing in front of the Center as a computer science graduate from rural southeastern Oklahoma, I thought about how far



this work reaches, from classrooms in Ada to offices across the street from the West Wing to a digital library meant to outlast everyone who built it.

I have come full circle. I now get to teach Public Interest Technology at East Central University, helping prepare the next generation of technologists for the work ahead.

To the students in those classrooms now: the distance between Ada and

the highest levels of government is shorter than you think. East Central gave me the tools and the confidence to step into rooms I never imagined I would enter. My job now is to make sure you walk into them ready, because students from East Central have done it before, and you will do it again.

Rusty D. Pickens is a graduate of East Central University, where he teaches Public Interest Technology. Reach him at rpickens@ecok.edu.

10th Anniversary
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 FESTIVAL ON THE PLAZA

ECU CENTENNIAL PLAZA
 OCTOBER 15 2026
 5:30PM - 7:30PM

ENTERTAINMENT HEADLINER

FEATURED ENTERTAINMENT & ACTIVITIES

FIVE WORLD-CLASS MAGICIANS. ONE MIND-BLOWING SHOW.
THE REVOLUTIONISTS

• INFLATABLES • CORNHOLE • FOOD TRUCKS

PRE-SHOW ENTERTAINMENT BY JUSTIN MASSEY

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CELEBRATING THE OKA INSTITUTE'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

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ECU

Spirit of Roary
 HOMECOMING 2026