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Rochelle Rowley, Professor in the School of School of Humanities + Social Sciences Directory
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Jerald Spotswood, Professor of English and Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
Tabatha Tafoya, Director of Human Resources

Students

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Harris Kossover, Graduate Student, in Business Administration and ESU Director of Athletic Digital Content
Madison Vermetten, Senior, Majoring in Biology and Health & Human Performance

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Greg Ek, First Vice President, Wealth Management, Alternative Investments Director at Morgan Stanley
Jason Fanning, Vice President at Black & Veatch
Erren Harter, Mayor of Emporia
Greg Kossover, Executive Officer and Director of Equity Bancshares
Jonathan Krueger, Vice President of Security at Reserv
Denise Larrick, Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer Lyon County State Bank
Mike Law, Owner and Operator Law Communications and Litte Apple Broadcasting
Jeff Longbine, Owner Longbine Auto Plaza
Brody Peak, Owner and Operator Emporia Livestock Sales
Doug Peck, Lyon County Commissioner
Cathy Pimple, Chief Executive Officer of Newman Regional Health
Patricia Saenz-Reyes, USD 253 Migrant Education Student & Family Resource Specialist

Emporia State University Presidential Search Committee Member Bios

Jim Kessler, Chair

Jim graduated from Emporia State in 1974 with a Bachelor of Science in business administration. He began working for Modern Air Conditioning, Inc. and eventually became a co-owner. He retired as president and owner of the company in January 2017. He served two four-year terms on the Emporia City Commission including several terms as mayor. He is a past chair of the Emporia Area Chamber and Visit Emporia, as well as chair for the Regional Development Association and Emporia Enterprises. He has also served on the ESU Foundation Board of Directors. He has given back to the Emporia community through his work with many other organizations.

Neelima Parasker

Regent Neelima Parasker is the Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer of SnapIT Solutions, a trailblazing technology enterprise distinguished by INC 5000 as the fastest-growing technology firm in the nation for three consecutive years since 2022, celebrated for its excellence in technology services, software innovation, and transformative workforce development business model. Appointed by Governor Laura Kelly in 2023, she serves as a Regent on the Kansas Board of Regents, where she helps steer the strategic direction of the state's higher education institutions. She also serves on the KansasWorks State Workforce Board, the Kansas Registered Apprenticeship Council, and on the Community Development Advisory Council at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Osmania University, India, and a Master of Science in Computer Science from Oklahoma City University. Her pioneering work and thought leadership have been showcased in Forbes, INC, Oprah and Entrepreneur Magazines, as she continues to champion innovative workforce initiatives and the advancement of higher education across Kansas.

Blake Flanders

Blake serves as President and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents, the governing body for the state's six universities and coordinating board for thirty-two public higher education institutions. He leads strategic initiatives focused on supporting Kansas families and businesses, expanding access to education, and increasing statewide economic prosperity. During his tenure as CEO, he has overseen the development and implementation of a strategic plan that has yielded significant results for Kansas. In the five years since it was adopted, on-time graduation rates at state universities have increased by 10.2 percentage points, state funded student financial aid has nearly quadrupled, enrollment of Pell recipients has increased, dual/concurrent enrollment has grown nine percent, and starting wages for graduates from the Kansas system have increased by 22 percent. Blake earned degrees from Colby Community College and Kansas State University, including a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. His leadership continues to shape the future of higher education in Kansas.

Faculty and Staff

Aaron Clark

Aaron serves as an IT Support Specialist at Emporia State University, where he has worked for over two years to ensure reliable connectivity and technical support for students, faculty, and staff. A U.S. Navy veteran with five years of overseas service, he brings strong leadership and problem-solving skills to his role. Prior to joining ESU, he served as a Firefighter/EMT in Emporia and worked in Nuclear Security at Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation. He holds a bachelor's degree in Information Technology and is honored to support ESU's future as a member of the presidential search committee.

Rajarshi Dey

Rajarshi is an Associate Professor of Statistics in the School of Science and Mathematics at Emporia State University. He earned a Ph.D. in Statistics from Kansas State University, specializing in nonparametric statistical methods. Over the past decade, he has taught a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses, directed numerous student research projects, and published across areas including statistical methodology, biostatistics, and public health. His research has appeared in journals such as WIREs Computational Statistics, American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, and Environmental Science & Technology, with more than 820 citations

to date. He is an active member of multiple Professional organizations, reviewer for various journals of Statistics and Data Science and currently serve as the National Treasurer of Kappa Mu Epsilon, a national Mathematics honor society. He serves as a member of Emporia State University's Faculty Senate. Beyond research and teaching, he has provided statistical consulting on over 250 projects and remains engaged in community outreach and mentoring.

Steve Rodecap

Steve was named Director of Athletics at Emporia State on August 5, 2025, after quickly advancing from Assistant AD of Operations to Senior Associate AD, where he oversaw multiple sports, played a major role in key hires including men's basketball coach Tom Billeter and women's basketball coach MJ Baker, and served on the search committee for the President of the Emporia State University Foundation. He also led initiatives such as securing free admission to all 2025–26 athletic events during the ESU Year of Celebration. Prior to Emporia State, Rodecap spent 20 years as director of tennis at Marquette University, becoming the program's all-time wins leader, guiding the men's team to a BIG EAST title, and leading the women's team while mentoring coaches who advanced to leadership roles nationwide. Earlier in his career, he served as head coach at Northern Illinois University and was an assistant at Texas Christian University. Nationally, he chaired the NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Tennis Committee and co-chaired the Intercollegiate Tennis Association Rules Committee.

Rochelle Rowley

Rochelle is a professor at Emporia State University and the 2025-2026 President of the Faculty. She is in her 13th year in the Applied Sociology and Applied Criminology programs with a background in sociology (Master of Arts, Wichita State University) and psychology (Ph.D. of Psychology - Community, Wichita State University). She brings an interdisciplinary perspective and experience with private, non-profit, and academic industries. Guided by Emporia State University's mission and values, she is committed to participating in the process of selecting a president who will foster academic excellence, innovation, and student success.

Sara Schwerdtfeger

Sara serves as the Dean of The Teachers College at Emporia State University. For over 25 years, she has been involved in education including work in higher education and in elementary schools. Through her time at ESU, she has taught mathematics and science education courses, lead her team through successful state accreditation, and has grown enrollment in education programs. She holds her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction in Mathematics Education from Kansas State University.

Jerald Spotswood

Jerald is a Professor of English and currently serves as Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School at Emporia State University. Previously, Spotswood served as Assistant Dean of the Graduate School at Fort Hays State University, Chair of the Languages and Literature Department at Eastern New Mexico University, and Endowed Chair of Shakespeare Studies at West Texas A&M University. As Vice Provost at ESU, Spotswood serves as the direct report for three deans and five directors. Additionally, Spotswood has led open educational resource (OER) efforts across campus and accelerated online program (AOP) efforts within the School of Business and Technology, The Teachers College, and Nursing within the School of Applied Health Sciences.

Tabatha Tafoya

Tabatha serves as the Director of Human Resources at Emporia State University, where she supports leadership in workforce planning, talent acquisition, employee relations, and organizational effectiveness. With more than 15 years of HR experience, she is recognized for her approachable communication style, ability to anticipate needs, and strength in building trusting relationships across all levels of the institution. Her background includes extensive work in recruitment, compliance, compensation strategy, labor relations, and training program development, but her greatest impact comes from fostering collaboration, resolving complex challenges with empathy, and creating environments where employees feel valued and supported. She is skilled at balancing strategic decision-making with practical management, ensuring policies and initiatives are both sustainable and

aligned with institutional goals. This combination of collaborative leadership and strategic insight allows her to contribute effectively to both people-focused conversations and high-level boardroom discussions.

Students

Joel Franz

Joel is a senior at Emporia State University majoring in Accounting and Finance, with an expected graduation in May 2026. At ESU, he has served two years as Chairman of the Fiscal Affairs Committee for the Associated Student Government and as a voting member of the Tuition & Fees Committee. He has also held two terms as President of Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity, contributed to the ESU Homecoming Transformation Committee, and collaborated with the ESU Foundation and School of Business to establish the Student Managed Investment Fund, launching in August 2026. Professionally, he began his career at Emporia State Federal Credit Union as a Member Service Representative, where he supported Hornet alumni with their financial needs. He then interned with Koch Industries in Summer 2025, serving as an Accountant for KBX Logistics. In this role, he advanced automation, financial analytics, and the use of data science in accounting practices. Following graduation, he will begin full-time employment with Koch Industries in June 2026.

Harris Kossover

Harris is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration at Emporia State University, where he also serves as Director of Athletic Digital Content for ESU Athletics. He earned his undergraduate degree in Business Administration with a minor in Accounting in May 2025. As a student-athlete, Harris was captain of the men's tennis team, President of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and a three-time Sauder Family Athletic Scholar. He was also named to the Dean's List and Athletic Director's Honor Roll. Professionally, Harris has completed three internships in the financial services industry, gaining valuable experience to support his career goals.

Madison Vermetten

Madison is a senior at Emporia State University majoring in Biology and Health & Human Performance. She is on the women's track and field team and compete in discus and hammer throw. In addition to her academic and athletic commitments, she is treasurer of the Emporia State chapter of TriBeta Biological Honor Society, and she is a member of Chi Alpha Sigma. She also holds a leadership role on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee executive board as social media chair. Through involvement across academics, athletics, and student leadership, she brings a diverse perspective and a commitment to excellence to the search committee.

Alumni/Community

Greg Ek

Greg is First Vice President, Wealth Management and Alternative Investments Director at Morgan Stanley. A native of Emporia, Kansas, he graduated from Emporia High School in 1972 and earned a degree in Business Administration from the University of Kansas in 1976. He serves on the Executive Committee of the ESU Foundation and is a member of the Business School Dean's Advisory Council. Greg supports Emporia State University through the President's Club and annual giving. His civic involvement includes leadership roles with the East Wichita Rotary, the Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce, and service on the KU Alumni National Board and KU Chancellor Search Committee.

Jason Fanning

Jason is Associate Vice President at Black & Veatch, where he leads the Enterprise Risk Management function. He previously held finance and leadership roles at Sprint from 2000 to 2016. Jason earned a degree in Accounting from Emporia State University in 1995 and an MBA from Baker University in 2003. He currently serves as Chair of the ESU Foundation Board of Trustees and has volunteered with the university for over a decade, including six years on the ESU Alumni Association. Jason also serves on the National Board of Directors for Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity and as Alumni Advisor for the Delta Chapter at ESU. He met his wife, Tiffany, while attending ESU, and their daughter, Macy, graduated from the university in spring 2025 with a Bachelor of Science.

Erren Harter

Erren is Mayor of the City of Emporia and President of Emporia's Radio Stations, Inc., where he leads efforts to inform and engage the local community. A lifelong resident of Emporia, he is passionate about helping others and supporting the city's growth. Erren has served on numerous boards and civic organizations throughout the years. He lives with Melanie Cates and their two children, Marley (16) and Layla (13), along with their dog, Pearl.

Greg Kossover

Greg serves as Executive Officer and Director of Equity Bancshares, guiding the strategic growth of the regional banking company. He earned a BSB in Accounting from Emporia State University in 1985, passed the CPA exam, and competed as a four-year varsity tennis player. Greg is a Trustee of the ESU Foundation and will soon begin his term as Chair.

Jonathan Krueger

Jonathan is Vice President of Security at Reserv, where he leads cybersecurity and IT practices for the company. He earned a degree in Political Science from Emporia State University in 2010, where he was active in Alpha Kappa Lambda fraternity and Student Government. Johnathan is currently serving his second term as a Trustee for the ESU Foundation, having previously served from 2011 to 2020. He lives in Newton, Kansas, with his wife and two sons.

Denise Larrick

Denise came to Emporia State University on a basketball scholarship and received her bachelor's degree in business in 1988. She was inducted into the athletic Hall of Honor in 2004. Denise has been in banking for over 40 years and works for Lyon County State Bank as the Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer.

Mike Law

Mike Law, a 1981 graduate of Emporia State University and 1977 graduate of Emporia High School, enjoyed a 44-year career in radio broadcasting, including 32 years in the Kansas City market and 26 years at KBEQ. He served as VP of Country Programming for CBS Radio Kansas City and Wilks Broadcasting USA, earning national honors from Billboard and RADIO Ink, and induction into multiple broadcasting halls of fame. A proud Hornet, Mike is an ESU Distinguished Alumni, recipient of the Alumni Association Service Citation Award, a Trustee Emeritus of the ESU Foundation, and a member of Beta Gamma Sigma through the ESU School of Business. He now owns and operates Law Communications and Little Apple Broadcasting, with stations in Haines City, Florida, and Manhattan, Kansas, and is a partner in On Air Group I and II, which includes a sports bar in DeSoto.

Jeff Longbine

Jeff Longbine and his wife Gwen have been strong supporters of Emporia State University since they met while attending ESU over 40 years ago. Jeff is the owner of Longbine Auto Plaza in Emporia. He has also served both his city and state as a former State Senator (2010-2024) and former City Commissioner (2017-2019). Jeff and Gwen have received two prestigious awards from ESU, in 2021 they received the University Service Citation award and in 2024 they received the Presidential Award for Emporia State University and Community. Jeff has previously served as a trustee for the ESU Foundation and been named a Trustee Emeritus.

Brody Peak

Brody is owner and operator of Emporia Livestock Sales, a business he began managing for his grandfather, Olma Peak, before purchasing it in 2007. Born and raised in Emporia, Kansas, Brody earned a degree in Animal Science from Kansas State University. He and his wife, Dana, have four children ranging in age from 8 to 21, and remain deeply rooted in the Emporia community.

Doug Peck

Doug is a lifelong Kansan and veteran of the United States Air Force, serving from 1969 to 1973. He retired as a Master Trooper with the Kansas Highway Patrol and holds a degree in Criminal Justice. He is currently serving

his second term as a Lyon County Commissioner, continuing his dedication to public service. He and his wife have been married for 56 years and are proud parents of two daughters, both graduates of Emporia State University.

Cathy Pimple

Cathy Pimple is the Chief Executive Officer of Newman Regional Health in Emporia, Kansas, and a proud alum of Emporia State University. A native Kansan, she also served on the ESU faculty for more than 12 years before moving into healthcare leadership. She holds a Master of Science in Public Health and a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from The University of Kansas, with passions rooted in both higher education and healthcare. Widely respected regionally and nationally, Cathy is recognized for her exceptional service and impactful leadership in healthcare, higher education, and community advancement.

Patricia Saenz-Reyes

Patricia serves as the Migrant Education Student & Family Resource Specialist for USD 253, where she works to strengthen connections between schools, students, and families. She brings over 15 years of experience in education and family engagement, along with 12 years in Property & Casualty Insurance. Passionate about advocacy and community partnerships, Patricia is dedicated to ensuring every student has the support needed to succeed academically and personally.