

Eastern Michigan University Student Receives Call from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Arlington, Va., May 10, 2012 – **Benjamin White**, a senior at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) and a student member of the Council for Exceptional Children, received a phone call May 10 from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. White was one of just four teachers that Secretary Duncan selected to call during Teacher Appreciation Week and personally express his appreciation for their dedication and work.

“It was definitely surprising. I had no idea Secretary Duncan would join the call,” said White of his call with Secretary Duncan. “I thought I was just going to speak to members of the Department’s staff about teacher preparation programs – I had no idea what was coming!”

White said Secretary Duncan thanked him for his commitment to education and praised his accomplishments. Duncan also asked White what he thought the Department of Education should do to attract great teachers. White told the Secretary that, in his experience, having the opportunity to work in the field and be engaged in the classroom with the students was critical to his decision to work in education.

“Teacher Appreciation Week is an opportunity to share the praise and appreciation that teachers deserve every day,” said Secretary Duncan. “But it is even more important to go one step further and use this week as a chance to learn more from teachers about how we can make teaching not only one of America’s most important professions, but also one of America’s most valued professions.”

White is the 2012 recipient of the Kayte M. Fearn CEC Ethnic Diversity Scholarship, an annual scholarship given to a CEC student member who is currently pursuing a degree in special education. This award is named honor of Dr. Kayte M. Fearn, who in her 67-year career in special education worked to enhance educational opportunities and education success for professionals and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Prior to enrolling at EMU, Benjamin was a paraprofessional in Rochester Community Schools. It was there in a classroom for students with autism that he found his passion for education. He is currently pursuing a degree in Elementary Education and Cognitive Impairment at EMU.

White serves as President and Children and Youth Action Network Coordinator for the Michigan CEC Student Association. He was instrumental in organizing and facilitating a panel discussion last fall featuring U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Special Education Alexa Posny.

CEC is an international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC’s mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy.

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