

## EMU Today

### Successful area business people share their secrets of success with students at Alumni Business Conference at Eastern Michigan University



*Brian Turnbull, vice president of client services at NITS Services, presents "Being Your Own Brand: Get Hired Quickly for Who You Are!" at the EMU Alumni Business Conference.*

YPSILANTI – Howdy Holmes has several fun twists in the questions his company asks job applicants. We can't reveal what these very distinctive questions are, but suffice it to say they are fun and nothing that you'd expect in a candidate interview.

Rosalyn Emerson has seven special tips to unlock your personal and career success.

Holmes, president and CEO of Chelsea Milling, which makes Jiffy Mix, one of the most well-known food products in America; and Emerson, channel marketing director at Chobani Yogurt, spoke at the annual Alumni Business Conference Sept. 19 at Eastern Michigan University. They were among dozens of speakers at the event, held at the College of Business. Topics included Cracking the Corporate Code, Habits of a Millionaire/Billionaire and How to Be a Leader.

Successful business alumni from around the area spoke at morning and afternoon sessions, bracketed around a networking lunch in the COB courtyard. More than 400 students attended the conference.



*Howdy Holmes, president and CEO of Chelsea Milling, speaks at the annual EMU Alumni Business Conference.*

Holmes said he and his staff carefully watch candidates' reactions to those playful (yet tricky) questions, noting that they can offer clues as to how the candidate might function in the highly supportive and collaborative environment at Jiffy Mix.

Does the candidate become flustered? Fidget? See the humor in the moment? Is this candidate resilient? Does s/he insist on having offered the right answer? All these can offer clues as to how the candidate might fare in the job – combined, of course with a wide variety of other questions, Holmes said.

His point? Character, personality and your ability to work with people and treat them with empathy count greatly in the workplace, and such questions tap into that understanding.

Holmes, who took over the family business after a successful Indy-Car racing career, now oversees the No. 1 grocery selling item in America. He offered a variety of insights and advice to the EMU students:

- First of all, under commit and over perform in your job.
- When judging yourself, you generally base that assessment on your intentions. But others judge you by your actions.
- The business world can be much different than academia. There is considerably more cut-throat competition and information hoarding. A lot of people don't want to see you succeed.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Seek a wide variety of experiences. That is how you learn and grow.
- Try to follow through on your distinct ideas and intentions.
- Don't be afraid to reinvent yourself. That's surely what Holmes did in moving from elite car racing to a corporate leadership position, taking over a family company racked by dissension.
- Treat others the way they want to be treated.

Holmes' perspective impressed the students who attended his sessions.

"It was very interesting, and it came from the heart," said Gina Taravella, a freshman specializing in business management. "I got a lot out of it, especially the part about how to reinvent yourself in various challenging situations."

Emerson, who lives in New York City and works in the highly competitive yogurt market, offered key perspectives she's developed since her days at Eastern.

1. Network like you mean it.
2. Get a specialization as a company employee and as an individual.
3. Ask for exposure throughout your career, starting with your first job.
4. Walk your own path. It is your journey, your race. This pertains to social media, too.
5. Improvement is a gift.

6. Create additional opportunities in your life. You have your job, but you can also be, for example, an influencer, a writer, an event planner or a dance teacher.

7. Let your passion guide your light.

How did Emerson find her professional passion? She credits her 11th grade social studies teacher, who helped her see how much she loved talking to people, how she reveled in being around people and in helping them.

“She was the first person who helped me see these things in me,” Emerson said, noting that such persons are out there for all of us, so seek them out.

### **About Eastern Michigan University**

Founded in 1849, Eastern is the second oldest public university in Michigan. It currently serves more than 18,000 students pursuing undergraduate, graduate, specialist, doctoral and certificate degrees in the arts, sciences and professions. In all, more than 300 majors, minors and concentrations are delivered through the University's Colleges of Arts and Sciences; Business; Education; Engineering and Technology; Health and Human Services; and, its graduate school. EMU is regularly recognized by national publications for its excellence, diversity, and commitment to applied education. For more information about Eastern Michigan University, visit [the University's website](#).

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