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WKU Regents approve Alumni Center name change

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The Western Kentucky University Augenstein Alumni Center will be renamed the The Eva and Jim Martens Alumni Center after the Board of Regents approved the change during its quarterly meeting Friday morning. From left to right: WKU President Timothy C. Caboni, Eva and Jim Martens.

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The Western Kentucky University Augenstein Alumni Center will be renamed The Eva and Jim Martens Alumni Center in recognition of the couple's \$5 million commitment to benefit the center and WKU Athletics.

WKU's Board of Regents approved the name change during its quarterly meeting Friday morning.

The university will honor the couple's gift during a celebration April 22.

The center was originally named for Dale Augenstein, a 1981 WKU graduate and former WKU Alumni Association National Board of Directors president, who provided the \$1 million lead gift in 2010 that led to construction of the alumni center.

The center was dedicated in 2013 in recognition of Augenstein's philanthropy.

WKU spokesman Jace Lux provided the Daily News with a university statement that thanked Augenstein for contributions to the university.

"We are grateful that Dale Augenstein made a significant financial commitment at a critical time to serve as the catalyst for the construction of the Alumni Center," Lux said. "The WKU Alumni Association and Mr. Augenstein reached a mutual agreement that his name could be transitioned to another part of the project if the Alumni Association could secure a larger naming commitment to ensure the facility is preserved and maintained."

The plaza in front of the alumni center where the well-visited Big Red statue is located will now be named the Augenstein Alumni Plaza.

“This naming will continue to honor his legacy and association with this special project in which he was so instrumental,” Lux said.

Before the change was approved by the board, WKU President Timothy Caboni praised the gift made by the Martens.

“I’m really pleased about this opportunity,” he said. “I’ve been so thankful for their leadership, their kindness and their investment in this institution. The size of this gift is special. It ranks them as one of the largest donors in WKU history.”

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The Martens' gift also benefits men's basketball, football and the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation.

"Western means a lot to us," Jim Martens said in a statement. "The welcoming spirit of Western Kentucky University that was extended to me more than 50 years ago is still alive and well. I can't describe how much I love Western."

"It is such a great honor," Eva Martens also said in the statement. "I'm thrilled."

The regents also approved a \$100,000 base salary raise for WKU football coach Tyson Helton and a \$50,000 annual retention bonus for volleyball coach Travis Hudson.

Hudson's bonus will begin Sept. 1, and Helton's raise will begin July 1.

The addendum for Helton's contract includes clauses for possible bonuses and termination payments.

If the Hilltoppers make the C-USA Championship Game, Helton will receive a \$50,000 bonus. If they win the championship, he would receive an additional \$50,000.

Athletic Director Todd Stewart said the pay hike for both coaches is coming from private funds through the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation.

The board also voted to approve a Master of Science in Cybersecurity Data Analytics program.

The program will be delivered entirely online, and will target working adults who are interested in pursuing careers in a variety of fields or enhancing their current employment.

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