
Introduction

Year in Review: FY2019-20

The 2019-20 academic year saw President Timothy C. Caboni begin his third year as President and the 2018-2028 WKU Strategic Plan “Climbing to Greater Heights” began its second year of implementation. WKU was prepared for a dynamic and educational academic year focused on student success.



The fall term was an exciting time - a new scholarship model was unveiled that increased funding 20%, making some 80% of incoming freshmen eligible for scholarships, double the percentage for Fall 2019. The new model no longer utilizes ACT scores to award the majority of academic merit-based and targeted scholarships. Instead, awards are based on unweighted GPA. This approach continues to make higher education more accessible, affordable, and sustainable for a greater number of students and their families. Efforts focused on retention were bearing fruit as in only two years, full-time student retention increased 3% to 72.9%. Campus emphasized a culture of continuous improvement, and we began formulating a Strategic Enrollment Plan and created a collaborative workgroup to improve our diversity, equity, and inclusion landscape.



The start of 2020 continued momentum built in the fall: as of 2018-19 the time to degree completion had decreased from 4.05 years from 4.28 a decade ago. In February, the process to develop a new WKU 2020-2030 Master Plan was initiated, a key component of the WKU Strategic Plan. As spring break approached, WKU was experiencing a very successful year.

However, in March, the global COVID-19 health crisis transformed operations at WKU in a matter of days. Spring break was extended in order to give faculty time to pivot to online learning. In rapid fashion some 500 plus faculty received training from the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning to assist them in this transition. President Caboni, in conjunction with the community, formed a COVID-19 taskforce. The entire campus community rallied together to ensure the safety of our students, faculty, and staff, working to close residence halls and support online learning for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester. Through these difficult times, WKU personnel remained flexible, creative, and caring.

The COVID-19 pandemic has required that we find new ways to educate and interact, but our resolve is steadfast. We are accustomed to challenges, after all, we are Hilltoppers. Western Kentucky University will face the personal and fiscal challenges, and forge ahead.

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Looking Ahead: FY2020-21

WKU is committed to the success of our students, current and future, our faculty, and our staff. This mission serves as the core of the budget development process. As planning began for Fiscal Year 2020-21, campus leadership looked forward to the implementation of the Resource, Allocation, Management & Planning (RAMP model), and a more decentralized decision-making process in partnership with campus constituents and governance groups.

Planning for FY21 began with request hearings between the *Operating Allocation Committee** (OAC) and campus leadership in November 2019. Central Support Unit budget recommendations were made to the *Budget Executive Committee** (BEC) in early December. In January 2020, the BEC began meeting to evaluate budget requests from Primary Units, and OAC recommendations. Campus was well positioned to yield the largest increase to our freshmen class in 18 years, thanks to the aggressive new scholarship model, in addition to increased recruitment efforts, particularly in the state of Kentucky. Discussions focused on tuition and

fee setting began with the expectation of a modest 1.5% reduction in the overall operating budget.



The COVID-19 pandemic brought life-altering challenges to the WKU family in March 2020. While the full financial impact of this crisis is not yet known, campus now faces additional enrollment decline, and a projected decline in state appropriations. However, the Hilltopper community is resilient. Together, we will face these hurdles head on, and come out stronger on the other side.