

8-24-2009

Western Kentucky University Convocation 2009

Gary A. Ransdell
Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/president_speeches



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ransdell, Gary A., "Western Kentucky University Convocation 2009" (2009). *Presidential Speeches*. Paper 3.
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/president_speeches/3

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Speeches by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

**OPENING FACULTY AND STAFF CONVOCATION
AUGUST 2009**

WELCOME TO OUR FALL 2009 OPENING FACULTY AND STAFF CONVOCATION. I WANT TO WELCOME THE FACULTY AND STAFF AT OUR REGIONAL CAMPUSES IN ELIZABETHTOWN, GLASGOW, AND OWENSBORO WHO ARE TUNING IN THROUGH AN IVS BROADCAST. THE DIDDLE ARENA VENUE IS A LITTLE LARGE FOR THIS CONVOCATION, BUT I PROMISE YOU THE NEW VAN METER HALL WILL BE WORTH THE WAIT, AND A WONDERFUL SITE FOR OUR 2010 CONVOCATION. THINGS I REFERENCE THIS MORNING CAN BE FOUND ON THE PRESIDENT'S HOME PAGE LINK ON THE WKU HOME PAGE, INCLUDING THE "HARD OPTIMISM" SURVEY WE'VE COMPLETED AT THIS CONVOCATION IN RECENT YEARS. THIS IS A CRITICAL MOMENT FOR OUR CAMPUS AND THIS UNIVERSITY FAMILY. WE ALL SEEK CLARITY AND REASONABLENESS IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES. THAT'S WHAT I INTEND TO HELP ACHIEVE THIS MORNING.

I TRUST THAT THOSE OF YOU NEW TO OUR CAMPUS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CAPTURE THE SENSE OF ENERGY AND AMBITION THAT FORMS THE DNA OF OUR INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ESTEEM AND IS AT THE CORE OF OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING. YOU NOW BECOME AN ADDED SOURCE OF ENERGY, INNOVATION, AND AMBITION INTO WHICH WE INTEND TO TAP IN THE YEARS AHEAD. TO THOSE OF YOU THAT HAVE BEEN HERE A FEW YEARS, AND PARTICULARLY THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE BEEN HERE MANY YEARS, YOU HAVE BEEN PART OF THIS TWELVE-YEAR TRANSFORMATION. YET YOU HAVE SEEN, IN THE LAST

YEAR OR TWO, THE ECONOMIC REALITIES THAT WE SHARE WITH OUR COLLEAGUES ACROSS THE GLOBE. WHILE THOSE REALITIES HAVE TEMPERED US IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, THEY DO NOT DETER OUR RESOLVE. THE TIME LINE TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION TO BE A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH MAY HAVE CHANGED, BUT OUR RESOLVE TO DO SO HAS NOT. OUR BLEND OF PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE WILL BE STRONG.

WE HAVE 76 NEW FACULTY AND SEVERAL NEW STAFF WHO HAVE JOINED US IN RECENT MONTHS. YOU COME FROM MARVELOUS COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE GLOBE. SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN WITH US FOR A FEW YEARS BUT ARE IN NEW POSITIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY FAMILY. SOME OF YOU ATTENDED WKU AS AN UNDERGRADUATE OR GRADUATE STUDENT BEFORE JOINING THE RANKS OF OUR FACULTY AND STAFF. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP AND YOUR TALENT. THANK YOU FOR DEDICATION TO YOUR DISCIPLINE, TO OUR STUDENTS, TO THE COMMUNITIES WITHIN OUR REACH. WILL ALL NEW FACULTY AND STAFF—THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE JOINED US IN THE LAST YEAR, INCLUDING NEW APPOINTMENTS THIS SUMMER—PLEASE STAND.

SPEAKING OF DEDICATED LEADERSHIP, IT IS AN HONOR TO INTRODUCE TO YOU THIS MORNING A GENTLEMAN WHO HAS SERVED OUR BOARD OF REGENTS FOR FOUR YEARS, BUT WHO NOW TAKES THE REIGNS AS CHAIRMAN OF OUR GOVERNING BOARD, MR. JIM MEYER. JIM IS A 1966 AND 1969 GRADUATE

OF WKU. A FORMER MEMBER OF OUR FACULTY AND LONG-TIME LEADER IN OUR BOWLING GREEN BUSINESS COMMUNITY. JIM IS THE OWNER OF MEYER MORTGAGE—I EXPECT MANY OF YOU ENJOY A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JIM AS WELL! TWO NEW REGENTS, JUST APPOINTED A FEW WEEKS AGO BY GOVERNOR BESHEAR, ARE MR. FREDDIE HIGDON OF LEBANON, KENTUCKY. FREDDIE IS A PRINCIPAL IN THE LAW FIRM OF SPRAGENS AND HIGDON. HE IS A 1972 GRADUATE OF WKU, AS IS HIS WIFE, NANCY. GOVERNOR BESHEAR ALSO APPOINTED MR. ROB WILKEY, WHO ATTENDED WKU FROM 1975 TO 1977. ROB HAS MOST RECENTLY REPRESENTED OUR LOCAL DELEGATION IN THE KENTUCKY GENERAL ASSEMBLY AS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. HE LIVES IN SCOTTSDALE WITH HIS WIFE, TERRY. I ALSO WANT TO THANK FACULTY REGENT PATTI MINTER FOR HER SERVICE TO THE BOARD THESE LAST TWO YEARS AND RECOGNIZE OUR NEW STAFF REGENT, MR. JAMES KENNEDY, AN EMPLOYEE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. I ALSO WANT TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MR. KEVIN SMILEY, OUR STUDENT REGENT AND STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT. KEVIN IS A SENIOR FROM DANVILLE, KENTUCKY. LET'S WELCOME THESE NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND THANK ALL OF THEM INCLUDING OUR OTHER FOUR REGENTS—MS. YEVETTE HASKINS, MR. LARRY ZEILKE, MR. DAVID PORTER, AND MR. JIM JOHNSON—FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP. WE ARE CURRENTLY AWAITING THE GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENT OF A NEW REGENT TO FILL THE SEAT RECENTLY MADE VACANT BY THE RESIGNATION FOR PERSONAL REASONS BY MS. JUDI HUGHES.

LAST TWO YEARS

THE 12 MONTHS SINCE OUR LAST CONVOCATION HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT FOR ALL OF US—BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. MANY OF US HAVE SEEN RETIREMENT FUNDS AND PERSONAL ASSETS DIMINISH. WE HAVE HAD TO CONSERVE MORE AND SPEND LESS AND MAKE DO WITH LESS CAPACITY. I WILL NOT TAKE YOUR TIME THIS MORNING TO GO THROUGH ALL OF THE DECISIONS, ACTIONS, AND DILEMMAS WE FACED LAST YEAR, BUT I DO WANT TO PUT OUR CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCE IN PERSPECTIVE.

MANY OF YOU WILL RECALL THAT WE INTRODUCED A NEW UPDATED STRATEGIC PLAN ON SEPTEMBER 14, 2007. THAT PLAN WAS THE CULMINATION OF A YEAR'S WORTH OF COMMUNICATION ACROSS OUR CAMPUS. IT CLEARLY OUTLINED A BROAD SET OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS THAT WOULD TAKE US TO NEW HEIGHTS AND MEASURES IN THE PURSUIT OF OUR VISION TO BE A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH. WE EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE THOSE OUTCOMES BY 2012. THE PLAN INCLUDED CERTAIN FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS THAT WERE NECESSARY TO BE SUCCESSFUL—ASSUMPTIONS OF INCREASES IN STATE FUNDING AND TUITION THAT AT THE TIME SEEMED REASONABLE.

SOME UNEXPECTED THINGS HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO 2012—AND IT STARTED IN DECEMBER 2007 WHEN THE WORDS “ECONOMIC RECESSION” BEGAN

TO CREEP INTO OUR VOCABULARY. NEWS OF STATE BUDGET CUTS FOLLOWED. NOT ONCE BUT TWICE—MIDYEAR OF THE 2008 FISCAL YEAR AND AGAIN IN THE 2009 FISCAL YEAR. WE ENTERED THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN JANUARY OF 2009 WITH THE THREAT OF EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN STATE FUNDING AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FREEZES ON TUITION.

I TOOK A HARD LINE ON THOSE TWO ISSUES—TELLING THE CPE, THE GOVERNOR, AND LEGISLATORS THAT DECLINING REVENUES AND INCREASING ENROLLMENTS WERE INCOMPATIBLE—IF INDEED, WE WERE FORCED TO CUT OUR BUDGET EVEN MORE SHARPLY AND IF AT THE SAME TIME WE LOST OUR ABILITY TO INCREASE TUITION AT EVEN MODEST RATES, THEN WE WOULD BE FORCED TO CAP OUR ENROLLMENT AND TO CLOSE THE WKU DOOR ON THE STATE’S HIGHER EDUCATION ENROLLMENT GOALS. CONTINUING GROWTH UNDER THE SCENARIO THEN BEING DISCUSSED WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN SIGNIFICANT EROSION OF QUALITY, AN OUTCOME THAT NONE OF US COULD HAVE TOLERATED. GOOD FAITH DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENTS OF ALL OF KENTUCKY’S UNIVERSITIES, CPE, OUR LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, AND THE GOVERNOR ENSUED. ULTIMATELY, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSED SOME MODEST REVENUE ENHANCEMENTS AND HIGHER EDUCATION WAS HELD TO A 2% BUDGET REDUCTION—MUCH LESS THAN THE 9% REDUCTIONS THAT WERE PROJECTED. WE ALSO WORKED WITH CPE TO ACHIEVE A 4% TUITION INCREASE, WHICH MIRRORS THE HIGHER EDUCATION PRICE INDEX INFLATIONARY MEASURE.

THIS WAS THE BEST WE COULD HAVE HOPED FOR IN 2009, GIVEN THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE, AND WHEN ASKED SPECIFICALLY BY GOVERNOR BESHEAR AND OTHER LEGISLATORS AT CPE IF THIS COMPROMISE WOULD ALLOW WKU TO CONTINUE ITS GROWTH—I SAID YES.

IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS WE DEAL WITH SO MANY SCENARIOS AND WHAT-IFS. THERE IS A LOT OF SPECULATION, A LOT OF POSTURING, AND A LOT OF COMPROMISE THAT GETS US TO AN OUTCOME WE CAN ALL LIVE WITH. I CANNOT POSSIBLY FULLY COMMUNICATE EVERY ASPECT OF THAT PROCESS ALONG THE WAY. I DO, HOWEVER, ALWAYS HAVE THE BEST INTENTIONS, AND I TRY TO GET ALL I CAN FOR WKU. SOMETIMES—HOPEFULLY NOT OFTEN—I AM UNABLE TO FULFILL A PROMISE TO YOU. THAT HAPPENED LAST SPRING. I PROMISED TO DELIVER A SALARY INCREASE FOR THIS CAMPUS AND I WAS, IN THE END, UNABLE TO DO THAT. THAT WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR ME AND I KNOW IT WAS FOR YOU, AND I FOR THAT APOLOGIZE. ALL OF US CAN ONLY ACT WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION AT HAND. I WAS GUILTY OF OVERSELLING AND UNDER-DELIVERING. SINCE I CONSIDER MY PRESIDENCY TO BE AT ABOUT THE HALFWAY POINT, I WILL TRY NOT TO LET THAT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 YEARS!

AS YOU KNOW, WE MADE THE DECISION LAST SPRING TO REDUCE OUR BUDGET BY A LARGER AMOUNT THAN THE STATE CALLED FOR TO HOLD FUNDS

FOR A POSSIBLY LARGER BUDGET REDUCTION THIS FISCAL YEAR. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CAME TOGETHER EARLIER THIS SUMMER TO DEAL WITH A PROJECTED \$1 BILLION BUDGET DEFICIT FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR, AND BY USING FEDERAL STIMULUS DOLLARS, THEY HAVE FOR NOW SPARED HIGHER EDUCATION FROM FURTHER REDUCTIONS THIS YEAR. THIS ACTION ALLOWS US TO MAKE PERMANENT THE BONUS YOU RECEIVED IN YOUR JULY PAYCHECK. MOST OF YOU RECEIVED A 1.5 PERCENT ONE-TIME PAYMENT WITH A MINIMUM OF \$500 AND A MAXIMUM OF \$1000. THAT SAME AMOUNT WILL GO INTO YOUR PERMANENT BASE PAY NEXT JULY 1.

IN ANOTHER ACTION—AT THE REQUEST OF THE STAFF COUNCIL AND IN AN EFFORT TO OFFSET THIS YEAR’S LACK OF INCREASED BASE PAY—WE HAVE MADE THE DECISION TO ADD AN ADDITIONAL PAID HOLIDAY TO OUR ANNUAL CALENDAR. EFFECTIVE THIS NOVEMBER, WE WILL BE CLOSED ON THE WEDNESDAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING. YOU MAY PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT MY FIRST PRIORITY IS FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR OUR CAMPUS. MY NEXT PRIORITY, AS WE DEAL WITH ONGOING BUDGET PRESSURES, IS TO PROTECT JOBS AND AVOID UNPAID LEAVE FURLOUGHS. BEYOND THAT, WE WILL MANAGE OUR GROWTH, MANAGE OUR AMBITIONS, AND MAINTAIN AS MUCH CAMPUS DECORUM AND COHESION AS POSSIBLE UNTIL WE ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO SUSTAIN THE

PROGRESSIVE AND AGGRESSIVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES THAT HAVE DEFINED US IN RECENT YEARS.

OUR MANTRA FOR THE LAST 12 YEARS HAS BEEN DEFINED BY A TRANSFORMATION, MANDATED BY OUR BOARD OF REGENTS, AND PURSUED BY ALL OF US. WE HAVE INDEED CHANGED MUCH. WE ALSO NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE CANNOT JUST STOP, THAT WE CANNOT REMAIN WHO WE ARE CURRENTLY, OR ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE COMPLACENT. AS I HAVE SAID AT THESE CONVOCATIONS OVER THE YEARS, THERE CAN BE NOTHING SLOW OR UNSURE ABOUT US AS AN INSTITUTION. WE WILL HAVE THE SAME ENERGY, THE SAME RESOLVE, AND THE SAME AMBITION THAT HAS DEFINED US, BUT WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHALLENGING TIMES IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES AND ACHIEVE A PROPER PACE OF CHANGE AND INTENT. THEREFORE, THE KEYWORDS OF THIS DAY INCLUDE **CONSERVATION**, **TRANSITION**, **RENEWAL**, AND **POSITIONING**.

YOU CAN FIND ON OUR WEBSITE SUMMARY OF THE SAVINGS AND REDUCTIONS WHICH WE HAVE MADE IN RECENT YEARS. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO STUDY THAT LIST, AS IT WILL SURELY GROW IN THE NEXT YEAR OR TWO.

THE COMING YEAR

THE OTHER THING YOU WILL FIND ON OUR WEBSITE TODAY IS A SCHEDULE I WILL FOLLOW BETWEEN NOW AND DECEMBER. I AM CALLING THIS

MY “2009 LISTENING TOUR.” I HAVE AN HOUR-LONG APPOINTMENT SCHEDULED WITH THE FACULTY IN EACH ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT. IT BEGINS TOMORROW WITH PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY. MY INTENT IS TO COME TO YOU AND LISTEN TO YOUR THOUGHTS, SEEK YOUR INPUT, AND HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT YOU SEEK WITH REGARD TO THREE IMPORTANT MATTERS.

FIRST IS OUR CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLAN. REMEMBER THE ONE WE INTRODUCED IN SEPTEMBER OF 2007? THE ONE THAT HAS BEEN RENDERED OUT OF DATE, GIVEN THE RECESSIONARY ENVIRONMENT OF THE LAST 21 MONTHS? IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS, YOU WILL BE GIVEN A LINK TO AN ONLINE SURVEY IN WHICH YOU CAN SCORE THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN OUR CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN. YOU CAN EVALUATE THEIR IMPORTANCE AS CORE PRIORITIES FOR WKU. BEGINNING TODAY, ON OUR WEBSITE, YOU CAN FIND A SURPRISINGLY IMPRESSIVE LIST OF ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN THAT STRATEGIC PLAN, MANY OF THEM ACHIEVED IN SPITE OF THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE. I THINK YOU WILL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT HOW MUCH YOU HAVE ACHIEVED AND CONTINUE TO ACHIEVE. IT INCLUDES A LIST OF THE CAPITAL PROJECTS CALLED FOR IN THAT STRATEGIC PLAN THAT HAVE BEEN COMPLETED THUS FAR. BUT, YOU WILL ALSO SEE HOW THE FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS HAVE NOT HELD UP; HOW THE REVENUE PROFILE HAS CHANGED; AND, HOW IT WILL REMAIN UNBALANCED FOR THE INTENDED 2012 TIME LINE. THE INTENT OF THE ONLINE SCORESHEET IS TO LEARN FROM HOW YOU WOULD REPRIORITIZE THE THINGS WE INCLUDED IN THAT STRATEGIC

PLAN TWO YEARS AGO, AND WHAT MAY HAVE EMERGED AS A PRIORITY SINCE THEN. MY INTENT IS TO LEARN FROM YOU HOW WE NEED TO SCALE THE STRATEGIC PLAN BACK, LIVE WITHIN OUR MEANS, AND POSITION OURSELVES, COMING OUT OF 2012, WITH SUSTAINED MOMENTUM IN KEY AREAS AND A STRONG RESOLVE TO BROADEN OUR HORIZONS WHEN ECONOMIC CAPACITIES HAVE IMPROVED. REFOCUSING AND SCALING BACK OUR STRATEGIC PLAN WILL BE TOPIC NUMBER ONE IN OUR FACULTY CONVERSATIONS.

TOPIC NUMBER TWO WILL BE THE SEARCH FOR A NEW PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS. I WILL WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU, THE FACULTY, SEEK IN NEW ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP—IN YOUR CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER. NOT IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC TASKS, RATHER IN TERMS OF TRAITS AND SKILLS. IN THAT REGARD, I WOULD THANK THE MEMBERS OF THE PROVOST SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR THEIR EFFORTS WHICH ARE WELL UNDER WAY. THIS GROUP IS CHAIRED BY PROFESSOR SHARON MUTTER OF THE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT, AND AS YOU WELL KNOW BY NOW, IS COMPRISED PRIMARILY OF OUR UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORS. I SPECIFICALLY WANT TO THANK THEM FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING SCHOLARLY PERFORMANCE WHICH LED TO THEIR SELECTION AS A UDP AND IS NOW BEING CALLED INTO PLAY IN THIS IMPORTANT SEARCH PROCESS. WILL THE PROVOST SEARCH COMMITTEE PLEASE STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED?

IN A FEW WEEKS, YOU WILL BE PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO FORMALLY NOMINATE CANDIDATES FOR PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE THIS REQUEST SERIOUSLY. WE ARE NOT ENGAGING A SEARCH FIRM BECAUSE THE SEARCH COMMITTEE AND I BOTH FEEL THAT THIS ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IS FULLY CAPABLE OF DEVELOPING A STRONG POOL OF CANDIDATES. WITH THE HELP OF TONY GLISSON AND OUR STAFF IN HUMAN RESOURCES, WE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS ARE ADDRESSED TO RESULT IN A CONSENSUS APPOINTMENT BY MAY 1.

LET'S NOT SIT BACK AND HOPE THAT A GOOD POOL OF CANDIDATES COMES TO US. RATHER, LET'S BE AGGRESSIVE. I AM ASKING YOU TO TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO MARKET THIS SEARCH TO SCHOLARLY LEADERS AMONG US, ACROSS OUR NATION, AND INDEED, ACROSS THE GLOBE. IT IS MY HOPE THAT WE CAN IDENTIFY AND HIRE AN ACADEMIC LEADER THAT WILL INSPIRE YOU, LEAD BY EXAMPLE IN THE CLASSROOM AND RESEARCH LAB, BUILD ON OUR SERVICE LEARNING THEMES, WORK CLOSELY WITH STUDENTS AND STUDENT LEADERS, AND COLLABORATE COHESIVELY AND THOUGHTFULLY WITH HIS OR HER COLLEAGUES ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL. SOUND FINANCIAL ACUMEN IS A MUST. SO IS AN ENGAGING, EMBRACING, YET CONFIDENT WILLINGNESS TO EMPOWER THE FACULTY AND TRUST YOU TO DO YOUR JOBS IN OUR CLASSROOMS, LABORATORIES, AND ON OUR WEBSITES. I WANT SOMEONE WHO WILL HAVE OUTSTANDING CHEMISTRY

AND TEAMWORK WITH OUR DEANS, AND A BOND AND CONFIDENCE WITH ME PERSONALLY. AS I USE THIS YEAR TO BECOME MORE ENGAGED IN THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY, I AM LOOKING FOR SOMEONE THAT I CAN EMPOWER, TRUST, AND SUPPORT AS WE EXPECT MORE AND MORE FROM THIS ACADEMIC COMMUNITY.

BUT THAT'S A YEAR AWAY. FOR THE NEXT TEN MONTHS, BARBARA BURCH WILL CONTINUE TO BE OUR PROVOST. SHE HAS A LONG LIST OF THINGS TO ACHIEVE. IF YOU THOUGHT BARBARA WAS A WHIRLWIND FOR THE LAST 13 YEARS, JUST TRY TO KEEP UP WITH HER THIS YEAR! THERE WILL BE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO RECOGNIZE AND THANK BARBARA IN A FEW MONTHS, BUT GIVEN HER ANNOUNCEMENT EARLIER THIS SUMMER, PLEASE JOIN ME IN SALUTING OUR CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER, DR. BARBARA BURCH.

THE THIRD AND FINAL CONVERSATION I WANT TO HAVE IN THESE FACULTY MEETINGS RELATES TO OUR RESEARCH AGENDA AT WKU. WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF DICK BOWKER AS VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND WITH BUDDY STEEN AS PRESIDENT OF THE WKU RESEARCH FOUNDATION, WE HAVE BEGUN A PROCESS OF REENGAGING OUR FACULTY IN MEANINGFUL RESEARCH, AS WE DEFINE IT AT WKU. IT SEEMS APPROPRIATE THAT WE ENGAGE OUR FACULTY IN SUCH A CONVERSATION AS WE CONTINUE TO SEEK WAYS TO CONTROL OUR OWN DESTINY AS A UNIVERSITY, TO FIND REVENUE SOURCES WHICH GO BEYOND TUITION AND

STATE APPROPRIATIONS, AND TO ALLOW OUR INTELLECTUAL STRENGTHS TO BE NURTURED BY THOUGHTFUL RESEARCH AND PUBLIC SERVICE.

IN THE VERY BROADEST SENSE, OUR MISSION CAUSES OUR FACULTY TO BE ENGAGED IN APPLIED RESEARCH. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH EXISTS IN OUR CLASSROOMS AND LABORATORIES AND PUT IT TO WORK IN COMMUNITIES NOT ONLY ACROSS OUR REGION, BUT ALSO ACROSS KENTUCKY AND BEYOND. WITH OUR GROWING RESOLVE TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE WKU EXPERIENCE, WE WANT TO FIND WAYS TO HELP OUR FACULTY EXTEND THEIR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE GLOBE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE DO NOT HAVE FACULTY INVOLVED IN BASIC RESEARCH. THE SEARCH FOR NEW KNOWLEDGE IS ALWAYS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF OUR INTELLECTUAL ENVIRONMENT, BUT WHAT SETS US APART AS AN INSTITUTION IS THE PRACTICE-BASED NATURE OF OUR CURRICULUM, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH WE ARE ENGAGING STUDENTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS IN WAYS THAT GO BEYOND TRADITIONAL METHODS.

I EXPECT EACH DEAN AND DEPARTMENT HEAD TO FACILITATE THE SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ENDEAVORS OF THEIR FACULTY. SOME FACULTY CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE IN THOSE APPLIED AREAS THAT DIRECTLY TRANSLATE TO ECONOMIC OUTCOMES; OTHER FACULTY WILL EXPAND THE PURE KNOWLEDGE IN THEIR FIELDS; AND SOME SCHOLARS WILL PUSH AND EXPLORE THE BOUNDARIES OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION. THIS COLLECTIVE

INTELLECTUAL VITALITY MUST MOVE WKU AHEAD IN ACADEMIC QUALITY. I ALSO EXPECT INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR STUDENTS, GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE, TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHOLARSHIP OF THEIR DISCIPLINES. INTEGRAL TO A QUALITY EDUCATION IS THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN DISCOVERY AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION.

WE HAVE GREATLY IMPROVED THE CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENABLE THE TEACHING, LEARNING, AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES OF THE FACULTY. YET DECLINING STATE SUPPORT INCREASES THE NECESSITY OF FACULTY AND OTHERS TO AGGRESSIVELY SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO FUND THEIR OWN RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP. WE HAVE PUT IN PLACE A REVITALIZED SYSTEM TO SUPPORT FACULTY IN THEIR EFFORTS TO SEEK FUNDING. THE OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS IS WORKING TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP FACULTY IN EVERY WAY. WE ARE WELL-POISED TO CAPITALIZE ON FEDERAL STIMULUS DOLLARS. I URGE YOU TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES. NOW IS PERHAPS THE BEST TIME TO DO SO SINCE THE 1950S WHEN THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY MET THE CHALLENGE AND BROUGHT THE U.S. INTO A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THESE THINGS THIS FALL. LET'S COME OUT OF THIS FALL WITH A GENERAL CAMPUS CONSENSUS ON WHAT THAT BROAD AND DIVERSE TERM CALLED "RESEARCH" MEANS FOR US AT WKU.

YEAR OF CONSERVATION, TRANSITION, AND RENEWAL

OUR CHALLENGE THIS COMING YEAR IS TO FURTHER OUR INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION BUT IN REALISTIC WAYS. WE ALL FULLY UNDERSTAND THE TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, THAT IT CHANGES INDIVIDUAL LIVES AND FINDS REMEDIES TO GLOBAL PROBLEMS OF ALL KINDS. THESE, WITHOUT QUESTION, ARE VALUES SHARED EQUALLY AMONG US. OURS, HOWEVER, IS NOT THE ONLY MISSION TO HAVE EVOLVED AMONG KENTUCKY'S UNIVERSITIES—AND UNIVERSITIES EVERYWHERE. BUT WHILE ALL OF OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE EVOLVING TO MEET THE CHANGING NEEDS OF THEIR STUDENTS, OUR FOCUS IS HERE, ON WKU. OUR FOCUS IS ON WKU STUDENTS. OUR FOCUS IS ON WHAT IS BEST FOR EACH OF OUR FACULTY AND STAFF. OUR FOCUS IS ON THE COMMUNITIES WITHIN OUR REACH, AND THE ALUMNI WE PRODUCE. SO, WHILE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IS NOT NEW TO WKU, WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY, AND NEARLY OVERNIGHT.

YES, WE ARE REELING FROM SUDDEN FINANCIAL PRESSURES, BOTH AT OUR INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL AND BEYOND, AND CERTAINLY IN VERY REAL WAYS FOR OUR STUDENTS WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO PAY TUITION. I CONTINUE TO FIND, HOWEVER, THE PERVASIVE THEME THAT STUDENTS RECOGNIZE QUALITY WHEN THEY SEE IT, AND THAT MOST UNDERSTAND THAT AN INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY AT THIS UNIVERSITY, IS

AMONG THE MOST PRUDENT AND IMPORTANT INVESTMENTS THAT OUR STUDENTS WILL MAKE IN THEIR LIFETIMES.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THESE TRYING TIMES PRESENT US WITH SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES. OPPORTUNITIES TO THINK DIFFERENTLY, COLLABORATE MORE FULLY, RECONFIGURE OURSELVES FOR OUR LONG-TERM BENEFIT, AND COME OUT OF THIS THREE- OR FOUR-YEAR RECESSIONARY CYCLE POISED FOR A DECADE OF RENEWED PROGRESS. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SOPHISTICATED CHOICES ABOUT HOW WE USE OUR RESOURCES, HOW WE POSITION OURSELVES FOR OUR FUTURE, AND HOW WE DO SO TOGETHER. I BELIEVE THE COMING YEAR MARKS A DEFINING MOMENT FOR US AT WKU. I INTEND, AND I HOPE YOU WILL AS WELL, TO USE IT TO CREATE A SENSE OF RENEWAL, A SENSE OF THOUGHTFUL CONSUMPTION, AND A REDEDICATION TO THE WKU EXPERIENCE, WHICH CONTINUES TO BE BOUND BY A UNIQUE SPIRIT AND AN UNWAVERING LOYALTY.

A BOLD VISION, HOWEVER, IS NOT ENOUGH. GOOD INTENT IS NOT ENOUGH. WE MUST COMMUNICATE, LISTEN, AND BE WILLING TO MAKE OUR DECISIONS AND STAND FIRMLY BEHIND THEM WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF THE LONG-RANGE POSSIBILITIES. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE WKU CAMPUS REMAINS A PLEASANT, COHESIVE, AND CIVIL PLACE FOR OUR STUDENTS AND FOR YOU, OUR FACULTY

AND STAFF—AND ALSO FOR THE MANY GUESTS AND VISITORS WHO FREQUENT THIS CAMPUS ON A DAILY BASIS.

WHEN TIMES ARE FLUSH, WE HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT WE ARE PRETTY GOOD AT SPENDING INCREMENTAL REVENUE STREAMS. THESE ARE NOT FLUSH TIMES, AND WE MUST MAKE REAL STRATEGIC DECISIONS ABOUT ACADEMIC DIRECTIONS, PROGRAMS FOR INVESTMENT AND REDUCTION, AND FACE SHORT-TERM REALITIES WITHOUT TAKING OUR AIM OFF OF LONG-TERM POSSIBILITIES. SO IN THESE NEXT FEW MONTHS, I ASK FOR A MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION.

WKU IS NOT LIKELY TO ELIMINATE MANY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WE WILL, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO REFINE AND REDUCE SPENDING IN SOME AREAS. I DO BELIEVE WE NEED TO RETHINK HOW WE ORGANIZE OURSELVES AND, AS I HAVE SUGGESTED, BETTER DEFINE THE WAY FACULTY APPROACH TEACHING AND RESEARCH. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO COMBINE SOME THINGS. THERE WILL BE MORE THINGS THAT WE STOP DOING. OUR REALITY, HOWEVER, IS THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO GROW, WHICH MEANS SOME SERVICES MUST GROW WITH OUR NUMBERS, AND THAT WILL FORCE SOME BUDGETS TO GROW.

AMONG THE THINGS THAT WE WILL DO THIS YEAR IS MEASURE AND MANAGE OUR GROWTH, COMPLETE SOME PROJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN IN THE

MAKING FOR YEARS, MOVE US CLOSER TOWARD COMPLETING A \$200 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN GOAL—WHICH WE WILL DO BY 2012, AND FULLY ENGAGE THE CAMPUS IN CHARTING OUR FUTURE COURSE. I'LL BE SPENDING MORE TIME WITH YOU IN THE FALL SEMESTER. IN THE SPRING, I WILL PROBABLY BE PLAYING MORE DEFENSE THAN OFFENSE AS THE 2010 KENTUCKY GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONVENES. AS WE HAVE LEARNED, WHEN THERE IS NO NEW MONEY AT STAKE AND BUDGET DEFICITS HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED, IT IS EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF IN TRYING TO HANG ON TO WHAT YOU HAVE. THAT SAID, THE COLLECTION OF UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS IN KENTUCKY HAVE BEEN WORKING WELL TOGETHER FOR A FEW YEARS NOW, AND WILL PROBABLY REMAIN A RATHER COHESIVE LOT SINCE THERE WILL NOT BE MANY NEW DOLLARS OVER WHICH WE CAN FIGHT!

A WORD ABOUT OUR STUDENTS: AS USUAL, THEY ARE WAY AHEAD OF US. THEIR STANDARD OPERATING PRINCIPAL IS NOT JUST TO QUESTION OLD THINKING AND OLD WAYS OF DOING THINGS, BUT TO FIND, AND INDEED SEEK, NEW COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO THEIR OWN SELF EDUCATION. IT IS NOT JUST ABOUT TECHNOLOGY. WE BETTER KEEP UP WITH OUR STUDENTS, AND MAKE SURE THAT THEY ARE GETTING FROM US THE FULL VALUE OF THEIR GREATER INVESTMENT IN THIS WKU EXPERIENCE.

GOOD NEWS

AS I BELIEVE MOST OF YOU HAVE RECOGNIZED OVER THE LAST 12 YEARS, IT IS NOT MY NATURE TO GET BOGGED DOWN IN GLOOM, DOOM, AND DESPAIR, EVEN THOUGH SOME ON OUR ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL ARE CHARGED WITH KEEPING ME GROUNDED IN REALITY. MY CUP, HOWEVER, IS ALWAYS MORE THAN HALF FULL, AND THERE ARE MANY GOOD THINGS WHICH I FIND IN OUR WKU CUP THESE DAYS.

FIRST IS A STRONG AND STABLE ENROLLMENT. YES, WE HAVE BEEN THE FASTEST GROWING OF THE 8 UNIVERSITIES IN KENTUCKY NOW FOR 12 STRAIGHT YEARS, BOTH IN AN ANNUAL GROWTH AND TOTAL ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE. THAT IS A TRIBUTE TO THE QUALITY THAT EACH OF YOU ARE BRINGING TO YOUR RESPECTIVE DUTIES AND THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR FACULTY AND STAFF ARE FULLY ENGAGED IN OUR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS. IT IS ALSO A SALUTE TO OUR ACADEMIC TRANSITIONS PROGRAM THAT PREPARES OUR STUDENTS FOR LIFE AT WKU. ENROLLMENT, HOWEVER, HAS BECOME ONE OF OUR CONSTANT FINANCIAL STABILITY VARIABLES. IF CONDITIONS WORSEN AND WE HAVE TO STOP GROWING, THEN WE WILL; BUT, ENROLLMENT GROWTH, FOR US, HAS BECOME A REVENUE STRATEGY. FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE WE MUST EASE THE STUDENT BURDEN AND LIMIT TUITION INCREASES, AND WE ARE CERTAIN THAT STATE REVENUES WILL NOT INCREASE IN THE NEAR TERM. OUR GOAL WILL BE TO COVER FIXED-COST INCREASES WITH MODEST INFLATIONARY TUITION INCREASES FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. THIS MEANS THAT THE

REVENUE WE GENERATE FROM ENROLLMENT GROWTH MUST BE USED IN TWO WAYS: ADDRESS THE PRIMARY GROWTH PROGRAMS SO THAT FACULTY AND STAFF RESOURCES ARE THERE TO SERVE A GROWING POPULATION, AND USE SOME OF THAT GROWTH REVENUE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF COMPENSATION. REMEMBERING LAST YEAR'S PROMISES, HOWEVER, I MUST SAY THAT IT IS MUCH TOO EARLY AND PREMATURE TO BE ADDRESSING IF OR HOW WE MIGHT ADD TO THE ONE AND A HALF PERCENT SALARY INCREASE ALREADY LOCKED IN FOR NEXT YEAR.

I WANT TO COMPLIMENT DEAN KAHLER AND HIS STAFF IN ADMISSIONS, ATP, FINANCIAL AID, ADVISING, AND THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE FOR THEIR WORK IN IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING A STRONG CLASS OF INCOMING STUDENTS. OUR NEW STUDENTS ARE MORE INTELLECTUALLY CAPABLE, MORE DIVERSE, AND MORE INTERNATIONALLY ENGAGED, AND, AS WE CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BECOMING BETTER PREPARED.

I ALSO WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON QUALITY AND ACCESS. WE HAVE SPENT MUCH OF THE PAST YEAR SHARPENING OUR ADMISSIONS STANDARDS AND DEFINING THE PARAMETERS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION. GOING FORWARD, I GIVE MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE TASK FORCE FOR THEIR PRECISE DEFINITIONS OF **FULL**, **DIRECTED**, **CONDITIONAL**, AND **UNACCEPTABLE** ADMISSIONS STANDARDS FOR OUR

UNIVERSITY. THESE STANDARDS ARE NOW IN PLACE AS WE SHAPE A CLASS THAT WILL ENTER WKU THIS TIME NEXT YEAR.

WE ALSO HAVE RESPONDED WITH AN EMERGING PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ASSIST THEM IN BETTER PREPARING THEIR STUDENTS TO PURSUE A HIGHER EDUCATION. IT IS MY INTENT, AS WAS THAT OF THE TASK FORCE, TO EVENTUALLY REDUCE OUR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION. OUR FEEDER SCHOOLS, WITH OUR HELP, WILL ASSUME A GREATER ROLE IN HELPING ENSURE OUR STUDENTS ARE BETTER PREPARED WHEN THEY ARRIVE.

AS FOR THE PROPOSED NAME TRANSITION FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE—THAT WILL BE BETTER DEFINED IN OUR FACULTY MEETINGS THIS FALL. IN THAT REGARD, I WANT TO FULLY STUDY THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE WITH THE INTENT OF MINIMIZING ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. I AM LISTENING TO OUR FACULTY VIEWS ON THESE MATTERS.

WILL DAVID LEE AND THE MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT’S TASK FORCE ON QUALITY AND ACCESS PLEASE STAND AND LET US THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND THE COMPOSITION OF FUTURE STUDENT BODIES.

I ALSO CONTINUE TO FIND ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOME OF THE PRIORITIES OUTLINED IN OUR 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN, MOST NOTABLY, THE ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY SUCCESS OF THE GATTON ACADEMY OF MATH AND SCIENCE. CONGRATULATIONS, AFTER ONLY TWO YEARS, ON BEING NAMED BY NEWS WEEK MAGAZINE AS ONE OF THE ELITE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN AMERICA. IN A LONG LIST OF EARLY SUCCESSES FOR THE ACADEMY, FROM OUR STANDPOINT AT WKU, IS THE FACT THAT WKU IS THE PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARY OF ACADEMY GRADUATES. TO DATE, OF THE 108 GRADUATES OF THE ACADEMY, 48 HAVE SELECTED WKU TO PURSUE THEIR BACCALAUREATE STUDIES.

CONGRATULATIONS ALSO TO MANY OF OUR FACULTY FOR THE MENTORING OF SOME OF OUR TRULY OUTSTANDING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS, WHO ARE EARNING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIPS AT AN UNPRECEDENTED RATE. NOT ONLY ARE WE EXCEEDING NUMBERS FOUND ON OTHER CAMPUSES IN KENTUCKY, BUT WE ARE BEGINNING TO COMPETE WITH THE NATION'S PRESTIGIOUS PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS FOR SUCH HONORS.

CERTAINLY, I MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE GROWTH OF OUR HONORS COLLEGE. WHAT PROFOUND INSIGHT OUR BOARD OF REGENTS EXERCISED WHEN THEY CREATED THE STATE'S ONLY INDEPENDENT HONORS COLLEGE ON A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. WE HAVE REACHED A POINT WHERE WE ARE

NOW ACCEPTING 300 STUDENTS IN EACH INCOMING CLASS INTO THE HONORS COLLEGE, AND ARE ON OUR WAY TO ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF 1,200 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE HONORS COLLEGE. I AM SO PLEASED THAT AT WKU WE ARE ABLE TO MAINTAIN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS STUDENT SUCCESS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM. WE ARE PUTTING PROGRAMS IN PLACE THAT HELP THOSE STUDENTS WHO NEED MENTORING IN ORDER TO STAY IN SCHOOL AND BE SUCCESSFUL, AND WE ARE ALSO FOCUSING SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES AND ATTENTION ON STUDENTS AT THE HIGHEST END OF THE INTELLECTUAL SPECTRUM. THESE ARE STUDENTS WHO WILL GO ON TO THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS GRADUATE SCHOOLS ACROSS THE GLOBE—INCLUDING OURS—AND WHO WILL HELP RAISE THE INTELLECTUAL TIDE THAT BENEFITS EVERY MEMBER OF OUR STUDENT BODY AND OF OUR FACULTY AND STAFF. GOING FORWARD, WE WILL MEASURE HOW OUR HONORS COLLEGE IS DOING IN COMPARISON TO KENTUCKY'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS, SMALL, PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES. I LOOK FORWARD TO HELPING THE HONORS COLLEGE ACHIEVE A POSITION IN KENTUCKY AS THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS COLLEGE IN THE STATE.

ONE OF THE OTHER PLANKS IN OUR CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN IS TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE WKU EXPERIENCE. WE ARE DOING JUST THAT. WE HAVE MADE MUCH PROGRESS IN CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO STUDY ABROAD. YOU, THE FACULTY AND STAFF, HAVE CREATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR OWN ENGAGED TEACHING AND RESEARCH ACROSS THE GLOBE. WE CONTINUE TO REFINE INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES THAT

ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY. WE HAVE SOME GREAT BENCHMARK ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR OR TWO, INCLUDING A MARVELOUS PARTNERSHIP AT HARLAXTON COLLEGE IN GRANTHAM, ENGLAND. THIS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF EVANSVILLE ENABLES SUSTAINED ACCESS TO THIS GRAND OLD MANOR HOUSE WHICH IS NOW BENEFITING 30 TO 40 WKU STUDENTS EACH SEMESTER, AND FACULTY MEMBERS WHO ARE NOW COMPETING FOR POSITIONS ALONGSIDE THE BRITISH FACULTY WHO TEACH THERE. CONGRATULATIONS TO BETH PLUMMER, JERRY DADAY, NANCY RICE, AND MICHELLE LANE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENTS TO THE HARLAXTON FACULTY FOR THIS AND FUTURE YEARS. WE WERE ALSO ACCEPTED INTO THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL LABORATORY THIS YEAR. I WILL BE PARTICIPATING WITH MY COLLEAGUES IN THAT REGARD AT MEETINGS THIS FALL, WHICH WILL PUT US AT THE FOREFRONT OF A.C.E.'S PRIORITY FOR INTERNATIONALIZING AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL INVOLVED WHO HELPED SECURE THE MOVE OF THE KENTUCKY INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES WHICH IS NOW LOCATED AT WKU. CONGRATULATIONS, AS WELL, TO BERNIE STRENECKY FOR HIS HELP IN CONSUMMATING A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA FOR THEIR SEMESTER AT SEA PROGRAM. EIGHT WKU STUDENTS LEFT THIS WEEK TO CIRCLE THE GLOBE FOR THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS. IN THE FUTURE, WE HOPE TO FURTHER DEFINE OUR INTERNATIONALIZATION WITH MORE PARTNERSHIPS, IN MORE COUNTRIES, AND ON MORE CONTINENTS. WE ARE RECRUITING MORE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, AND WE EXPECT THAT

DELO'S INVESTMENT WILL TURN WHAT IS NOW COLONIAL COURTS ALONG NORMAL STREET INTO A WKU INTERNATIONAL VILLAGE.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SO MANY OF OUR FACULTY AND STAFF WITH THE ALIVE CENTER AND THROUGHOUT OUR COLLEGES FOR YOUR PREMIUM ON SERVICE LEARNING, FOR THE MANNER IN WHICH YOU ARE ENGAGING OUR STUDENTS IN IMPORTANT CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING THOSE IN OUR AMERICAN HUMANICS PROGRAM, WHO ARE PREPARING FOR CAREERS IN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR. CONGRATULATIONS TO PAUL MARKHAM FOR LEADING OUR EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL MODEL OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

HOW ABOUT BIG RED GOING GREEN? CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE FOR LEADING THE EFFORT TO THINK RED, BUT LIVE GREEN. OUR BEHAVIOR IS CHANGING. WE ARE FAR MORE CONSCIENCE NOW OF THE NEED TO SUSTAIN OUR ENVIRONMENT. THAT THINKING HAS TO START AT HOME ON OUR CAMPUS.

YOUR CONSERVATION EFFORTS THIS PAST YEAR WERE IMPRESSIVE. THIS PAST YEAR, WE ADDED 146,100 SQUARE FEET TO OUR CAMPUS AND OUR EMPLOYMENT RANKS CONTINUED TO GROW, YET WE CONSUMED 4.4 BILLION LESS KILOWATT HOURS IN OUR DAILY CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY. OUR COSTS WENT UP SIGNIFICANTLY, BUT WE ENDED THE YEAR SPENDING LESS ON UTILITIES THAN WE WERE BUDGETED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, EVEN

WITH SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN ENERGY COSTS. SOME 25 PERCENT OF OUR SAVINGS, OR ONE MILLION OF THE KILOWATT HOUR SAVINGS CAME AS A RESULT OF OUR EXTRA WEEK SHUT DOWN LAST CHRISTMAS. THE DECEMBER CALENDAR DOES NOT WORK FOR US THE NEXT FEW YEARS AS IT DID THEN, BUT THAT IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW WE CAN CONSERVE ENERGY AND STILL PERFORM EFFECTIVELY. THIS PAST YEAR, WE USED ONE THOUSAND FEWER TONS OF COAL. OUR GOAL THIS YEAR IS TO WEAN OURSELVES BY SOME 50 PERCENT FROM OUR DEPENDENCY ON COAL AND BEGIN A CONVERSION TO NATURAL GAS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, THEREBY FURTHER REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT IN MEASURABLE WAYS. OUR LONG-TERM GOAL IS TO EVENTUALLY CONVERT TO CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY AND USE NATURAL GAS AS OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF ENERGY. MY COMPLIMENTS TO DALE DYER AND HIS STAFF IN OUR ENERGY DEPARTMENT, AND TO CHRISTIAN RYAN DOWNING AND OUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE. ALL OF THE INDIVIDUALS IN THE ENERGY DEPARTMENT AND ON THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE PLEASE STAND SO THAT WE CAN RECOGNIZE YOUR EFFORTS. BY THE WAY, THAT APPLAUSE IS EXTENDED TO EVERYONE IN THIS CAMPUS COMMUNITY FOR YOUR PERSONAL EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD.

ALSO IN THE CATEGORY OF GOOD NEWS IS THE PROGRESS WE CONTINUE TO MAKE WITH OUR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS. WE CONTINUE TO SHAPE THE TECHNOLOGY CURVE, TO BE A STATE OF THE ART CAMPUS, AND IN SPITE OF BUDGET REDUCTIONS, CONTINUE TO ADDRESS OUR TECHNOLOGY

NEEDS AS EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE. EVERY ONE OF YOU NOW HAS 1 GIGABYTE OF PERSONAL STORAGE WITH INTERNET ACCESS. WE ARE MOVING TO A MORE ROBUST EMAIL EXCHANGE SYSTEM. WE ARE IMPLEMENTING NEW SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING AND VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOLS FOR FACULTY AND STAFF—AND THE LIST GOES ON. THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO THANK DICK KIRCHMEYER FOR HIS LEADERSHIP DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS THAT HE HAS SERVED AS OUR VICE PRESIDENT FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. DICK IS RETIRING IN A FEW DAYS. HE AND PAULINE ARE HEADED TO MYRTLE BEACH FOR A LIFE OF GOLF AND SEAFOOD. THANK YOU, DICK. AS WE THANK DICK FOR HIS LEADERSHIP, WE WELCOME BOB OWENS, WHO HAS BEGUN HIS DUTIES AS OUR NEW VICE PRESIDENT FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. BOB, WE WELCOME YOU AND LISA TO OUR CAMPUS COMMUNITY. WE LOOK FORWARD TO FOLLOWING YOUR IT LEAD.

ANY GOOD NEWS LIST FOR WKU THESE DAYS CONTINUES TO INCLUDE OUR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION FORENSICS TEAM. WHAT A GREAT RUN SINCE 2003. ONCE AGAIN, WE SWEEPED ALL OF THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORENSICS AND DEBATE TOURNAMENTS LAST YEAR. THIS IS ONE PROGRAM THAT WE CAN TRULY CLAIM AS THE VERY BEST IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION. CONGRATULATIONS, JUDY WOODRING, YOUR COACHES, AND YOUR STUDENTS.

AND YES, ONCE AGAIN, THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND BROADCASTING FINISHED IN THE TOP TEN IN THE WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST NATIONAL RANKINGS OF OVERALL PRINT, PHOTO, AND BROADCAST JOURNALISM PROGRAMS, AND AGAIN FINISHED FIRST IN THE PHOTOJOURNALISM COMPETITION—THE BEST IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION. CONGRATULATIONS PAM JOHNSON AND YOUR FACULTY, AND THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND BROADCASTING.

ALSO ON OUR GOOD NEWS LIST IS THE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL CAMPUS. ON OUR WEBSITE, YOU CAN SEE A COLOR-CODED CAMPUS MAP. IT SHOWS BUILDINGS THAT HAVE BEEN EITHER BUILT OR FULLY RENOVATED IN RECENT YEARS, BUILDINGS WHERE PROGRESS IS UNDER WAY, AND BUILDINGS THAT WE HAVE NOT QUITE BEEN ABLE TO GET TO, BUT HOPE TO DO SO IN THE NEXT DOZEN YEARS OR SO.

FOR MANY OF OUR FACULTY AND STAFF WHO HAVE JOINED US IN RECENT YEARS, YOU MAY HAVE THOUGHT THAT OUR CAMPUS HAS ALWAYS LOOKED WELL KEPT, UP TO DATE, AND VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE. IT HAS INDEED ALWAYS HAD THE CHARACTER AND UNIQUENESS THAT A HILLTOP PROVIDES WITH BOUNTIFUL TREES, ROCKS, AND TERRAIN DIFFERENTIALS. OUR ARCHITECTURE HAS ALWAYS HAD A BOLD CHARACTER—WELL, MOST OF IT HAS ANYWAY. BUT YOU NEEDED TO HAVE BEEN HERE BEYOND THE LAST DOZEN YEARS OR SO TO FULLY APPRECIATE THE AMOUNT OF PROGRESS WE

HAVE MADE IN IMPROVING THE CAMPUS, IN RENOVATING BUILDINGS, AND REPLACING BUILDINGS THAT NEEDED IT THE MOST.

HIGHLIGHTING CAMPUS BUILDING PROJECTS COMPLETED THIS PAST YEAR IS THE NEW SNELL HALL SCIENCE BUILDING, WHICH CREATES MARVELOUS NEW FACILITIES FOR BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, AGRICULTURE, AND ENGINEERING. IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN IN THIS BEAUTIFUL NEW SCIENCE BUILDING, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO GO OVER AND TAKE A LOOK. ALSO, CHECK OUT DAVINCI'S—THE NEW RESTAURANT IN THAT BUILDING.

CONGRATULATIONS TO DEAN FERRELL AND THE FACULTY IN OGDEN COLLEGE FOR A JOB WELL-DONE. THIS SUMMER WE COMPLETED THE RENOVATION OF PEARCE FORD TOWER, KEEN HALL, AND GILBERT HALL. WE ALSO FINISHED FOUR NEW PARKING LOTS ON THE EDGES OF OUR CAMPUS. AND FINALLY, WE FINISHED THE RENOVATION AND ADDITION TO HOUCHEM-SMITH STADIUM, INCLUDING NEW QUARTERS FOR OUR DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND KINESIOLOGY, AND THE FOOTBALL PROGRAM.

PROJECTS THAT WE WILL COMPLETE IN A FEW MONTHS INCLUDE: THE RENOVATION AND RESTORATION OF VAN METER HALL; THE PRESTON CENTER; THE RENOVATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY HALL; OUR NEW BUILDING IN OWENSBORO WHICH WAS FUNDED AND BUILT COURTESY OF DAVIESS COUNTY FISCAL COURT; AND THE CHANDLER CHAPEL. FINALLY, WE WILL MOVE CLOSER

TOWARD COMPLETION OF THE NEW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES BUILDING SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION IN DECEMBER 2010.

THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO REMIND OUR CAMPUS THAT OUR DEBT RATIO IS EXTREMELY LOW FOR A CAMPUS OF OUR SIZE WITH AS MUCH VOLUME OF CONSTRUCTION AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ENJOY IN RECENT YEARS. LESS THAN 4 PERCENT OF OUR CAMPUS BUDGET IS DEDICATED TO DEBT SERVICE, FOR WHICH WE, AS A UNIVERSITY, ARE RESPONSIBLE. MOST OF OUR PROJECTS HAVE BEEN FINANCED BY THE STATE, BY THE STUDENT LIFE FOUNDATION, THE CITY OR THE COUNTY, OR BY PRIVATE BENEFACTORS. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE TAX INCREMENT FINANCING—OR TIF—DISTRICT WILL SOON BRING A PARKING GARAGE, HOTEL, ALUMNI CENTER, AND A RETAIL/HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO THE NORTH END OF CAMPUS.

ANOTHER POINT OF GOOD NEWS RELATES TO THE OTHER PORTION OF THE 2007 OPENING CONVOCATION ADDRESS, WHICH WAS THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW CENTURY OF SPIRIT \$200 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO BE COMPLETED BY 2012. AS YOU MAY KNOW FROM SOME NEWS COVERAGE OVER THE SUMMER, WE ARE AT THE HALFWAY POINT OF THAT CAMPAIGN. OUR CURRENT TOTAL FOR GIFTS AND PLEDGES TO DATE IN THIS PARTICULAR CAMPAIGN IS RIGHT AT \$145 MILLION. WE HAVE HAD A NUMBER OF MARVELOUS GIFTS THROUGHOUT MOST OF OUR COLLEGES AND IN ATHLETICS THAT CONTINUE TO BUILD AN ENDOWMENT OF CONSEQUENCE—IN

SPITE OF A 9 PERCENT DECLINE IN OUR ENDOWMENT THIS PAST YEAR. AS OF TODAY, WE NOW HAVE 780 ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS, 36 ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS, AND 2 FULLY ENDOWED CHAIRS. WE ALSO HAVE NOW CLAIMED THE LATEST ROUND OF BUCKS FOR BRAINS MATCHING FUNDS FROM THE STATE. SO WITH NEARLY THREE YEARS LEFT OF THE CAMPAIGN, WE ARE ENTIRELY CONFIDENT THAT WE WILL SURPASS THAT \$200 MILLION CAMPAIGN GOAL IN DRAMATIC FASHION.

A MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERN AS WE APPROACH A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR IS RECAPTURING THE MOMENTUM IN ANNUAL GIFT DEPOSITS WHICH WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE SINCE 1997. THIS PAST YEAR, FOR THE FIRST YEAR OF MY PRESIDENCY, GIFT DEPOSITS WERE DOWN, AS WAS THE TOTAL VOLUME OF GIFTS AND DONORS. SO WHILE PRIVATE FUNDRAISING HAS BEEN ONE OF THOSE STRATEGIES TO SET US APART FROM PEER INSTITUTIONS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, IT WAS THE EQUALIZER THAT MADE US MUCH LIKE MOST OTHER INSTITUTIONS LAST YEAR. THAT TIDE WILL RISE AGAIN. GOING FORWARD, I CONGRATULATE TOM HILES AND HIS STAFF IN INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT FOR THE OUTSTANDING WORK THEY DO WITH OUR FACULTY AND STAFF TO BRING OUR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS TO THE WKU PHILANTHROPIC TABLE.

FINALLY, I WANT TO CONGRATULATE WOOD SELIG IN OUR ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT ON ANOTHER SPLENDID YEAR WITH 9 SUNBELT CONFERENCE

CHAMPIONSHIPS, A COUPLE OF EXCELLENT POST-SEASON RUNS IN MEN'S BASKETBALL, BASEBALL, AND TRACK AND FIELD, AND AS IMPORTANTLY, A SUSTAINED POSITION ATOP THE SUNBELT CONFERENCE IN ALL ACADEMIC MEASURES. THIS PAST YEAR WE HAD 180 OUT OF 388 STUDENT ATHLETES WHO EARNED A 3.0 OR BETTER, AND WE HAD NO PROGRAMS WHICH FELL BELOW THE NCAA ACADEMIC PROGRESS RATE STANDARDS. IN FACT, MANY OF OUR PROGRAMS, INCLUDING MEN'S BASKETBALL, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SUSTAIN A 100 PERCENT GRADUATION RATE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE PERFECTION ACROSS OUR 19 INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS AND ENSURE THAT OUR STUDENT ATHLETES ARE GRADUATING, STUDYING ABROAD, AND EARNING POST-GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS LIKE WE EXPECT OF OTHER UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.

TO MAKE SURE WE END THIS CONVOCATION FOCUSED ON OUR PRIORITIES, LET ME INTRODUCE SOME OF THE STARS WHICH YOU HAVE MENTORED, AND WHICH HAVE USED THEIR TALENTS TO ACHIEVE INCREDIBLE THINGS AS A WKU STUDENT. I AM GOING TO ASK FIVE REMARKABLE STUDENTS TO COME FORWARD.

- ELIZABETH ROMERO FUERTE
- CHARLIE HARRIS
- RACHEL REETZKE
- MATT RICE
- PATRICK STEWART

FUTURE CAUTION

IF THERE IS A WORD OF CAUTION THAT I LEAVE YOU WITH THIS MORNING, IT CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THAT NATIONAL FINANCIAL PHENOMENON CALLED "STIMULUS SPENDING." I MENTIONED EARLIER THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS APPROVED A BUDGET THAT DEVOTES MUCH OF THE STATE'S STIMULUS MONEY, SOME \$635 MILLION, OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS TO OFFSETTING CONTINUING REDUCTIONS IN STATE APPROPRIATIONS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION INCLUDING HIGHER EDUCATION. OF THAT \$635 MILLION, \$70 MILLION WILL BE COMING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, AND OF THAT, WE PROJECT THAT \$5.4 MILLION WILL COME TO WKU. THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS. YOU WILL HEAR OFTEN IN THE MONTHS AHEAD THAT WE ARE AVOIDING STATE BUDGET CUTS, THAT WE ARE BEING HELD FLAT, AND SO FORTH. AND WE ARE. THE BAD NEWS IS THE STATE IS DISPLACING RECURRING STATE FUNDING WITH \$5.4 MILLION IN NON-RECURRING FEDERAL FUNDING, FUNDS THAT WILL RUN OUT BY JUNE 30, 2011.

WE DO NOT KNOW ENOUGH YET ABOUT HOW ALL OF THIS WILL UNFOLD, BUT WE ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE STATE, WITH OUR COLLEAGUES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS, AND WITH CPE, AND WE ARE TRACKING THIS DAILY. I WILL KEEP THE CAMPUS INFORMED AS WE LEARN MORE AND PREPARE FOR DECISIONS ON THE USE OF STIMULUS DOLLARS.

CLOSING

IN CLOSING, I WANT TO FOCUS ON THAT WORD STILL, AS IN THE “WE STILL ARE” CONTEXT. WE ARE STILL, AS DAVID BOREN, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, WROTE IN A RECENT CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, THE “HOMETOWN” FOR MANY OF OUR STUDENTS. WHETHER OR NOT A STUDENT GREW UP HERE, THEY COME TO THIS PLACE, AND THEY BECOME PART OF A FAMILY. THEY BECOME PART OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY SURROUNDED BY FACULTY AND STUDENTS WHO CARE. THEY ACHIEVE INTERGENERATIONAL FRIENDSHIPS. THEY EMBRACE INTENSE AND PASSIONATE EMOTIONS FOR THIS PLACE AND ITS PEOPLE. I SEE IT IN THEM AT EACH COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY. I SEE THE TEARS IN THEIR EYES. I WATCH THEM SWELL WITH PRIDE AND APPRECIATION FOR HOW MUCH THE WKU EXPERIENCE HAS MEANT TO THEM. AND GUESS WHAT? IN SPITE OF SOME FRUSTRATIONS AND SOME DISAPPOINTMENTS IN THE FINANCIAL ARENA, I HEAR MUCH OF THE SAME EMOTION AND SEE MUCH OF THE SAME PRIDE IN YOU, OUR FACULTY AND STAFF.

I CHALLENGE YOU THIS YEAR TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY FOR THOSE WITH WHOM WE SHARE SUCH A UNIQUE AND SPECIAL CAMPUS. CONTINUE TO MAKE OUR OUTDOOR SPACES INVITING AND TECHNOLOGICALLY CAPABLE. LET’S CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT OUR RESIDENCE HALLS BECOME HOMES AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES. THAT WE CONTINUE TO OFFER EXCITING CAMPUS RESTAURANTS FOR ALL IN OUR COMMUNITY. OUR CAMPUS EVENTS, FROM ATHLETIC EVENTS TO THEATRE AND

DANCE AND MUSICAL PRODUCTIONS, MUST OFFER THE BEST IN HIGH-ENERGY LEARNING FOR OUR STUDENTS, FRIENDS, FANS, AND FOR YOU. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THAT OUR ACADEMIC FACILITIES, OUR CLASSROOMS, OUR LABS, AND OUR WEBSITES CONTINUE TO BE INNOVATIVE AND THOUGHTFUL SOURCES OF INTELLECTUAL GROWTH AND SELF-CONFIDENCE FOR OUR STUDENTS—AND FOR YOU.

I HEARD A STUDENT SAY AT COMMENCEMENT LAST MAY THAT THE REASON HE LOVED THIS PLACE SO MUCH WAS BECAUSE HE DID NOT HAVE A FAMILY UNTIL HE CAME HERE. HE NEVER OBSERVED A HOLIDAY AMONG LOVED ONES. HE NEVER HAD SOMEONE TO HELP CELEBRATE HIS SUCCESSES, OR TO HELP HIM THROUGH HIS DIFFICULTIES. HE SAID, **“THANK YOU FOR BEING MY FAMILY.”**

SO, REST ASSURED, THAT EVEN IN DIFFICULT TIMES THAT THIS PLACE IS STILL PLEASANT, STILL UNIQUE, STILL MEASURED AND PURSUED BY PEER INSTITUTIONS, STILL IMPROVING, STILL ACHIEVING ITS BOLD VISION TO BE **A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH**, AND IS STILL CHARACTERIZED BY A SPECIAL AND VERY REAL SPIRIT THAT DEFINES OUR VALUES, OUR TRADITIONS, OUR PRIDE, AND OUR CONFIDENCES. THAT WKU SPIRIT, **THE SPIRIT THAT MAKES THE MASTER**, IS STILL THE ENERGY THAT DRIVES US.

THIS WILL BE A YEAR OF TRANSITION AND RENEWAL. WE WILL PLAN PROGRESSIVELY, BUT IT WILL BE TEMPERED BY CAUTIOUS REALISM. WE WILL STILL PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE. WE WILL STILL STRENGTHEN OUR INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL. WE WILL STILL IMPROVE THIS CAMPUS. WE WILL STILL BALANCE TEACHING AND RESEARCH AND SERVICE. WE WILL LISTEN. WE WILL ENGAGE THIS ENTIRE CAMPUS IN IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO GROW IN WAYS THAT GO WAY BEYOND JUST NUMBERS, BUT WE WILL CONTINUE TO GROW TOGETHER. I LOOK FORWARD TO TALKING WITH YOU. THANK YOU.