

**MINUTES**  
**OF THE SPECIAL MEETING**  
**OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS**

**March 22, 1995**

Required statutory notice having been given, the special meeting of the Board of Regents of Western Kentucky University was held in the Regents Conference Room of the Wetherby Administration Building. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Earl Fischer, Chair, at approximately 9:00 a.m. CST.

**AGENDA ITEM 2 - Roll call**

The following members of the committee were present:

Mrs. Kristen Bale  
Mr. Robert D. Evans, Jr.  
Mr. Robert Earl Fischer  
Ms. N. Joy Gramling  
Mr. C.C. Howard Gray  
Mrs. Peggy W. Loafman  
Mr. Cornelius A. Martin  
Dr. Raymond M. Mendel  
Mr. Burns E. Mercer  
Mr. Fred N. Mudge  
Mr. Raymond Preston

Also present were President Thomas C. Meredith, Mrs. Liz Esters, Staff Assistant for Special Projects and Secretary to the Board of Regents; and Ms. Deborah T. Wilkins, University Counsel; Dr. Robert Haynes, Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. James Ramsey, Vice President for Finance and Administration; Mr. Robert Rutledge, Vice President for Institutional Advancement; and Dr. Jerry Wilder, Vice President for Student Affairs.

**AGENDA ITEM 3** - The purpose of the meeting was to consider the document, "*Moving to a New Level While Keeping Old Traditions.*"

Chairman Fischer stated that, "The Board is meeting in special session today to address a single issue, and that is the concept of "Moving to a New Level While Keeping Old Traditions." Before proceeding, I would like to make a couple of statements because there has been so much thought and energy spent on this campus on the desire to create a new atmosphere and a new level at this University, I would like to commend Dr. Meredith and the leadership of this

University for their vision and for their willingness to step out and challenge themselves, challenge the faculty, and challenge the students to pursue a new level of excellence. I would like to also commend the faculty and the administration of this University for picking up that challenge--for entering into the discussion in a such a manner that they have, for dissecting the plan, for studying it, for debating it, and just striving towards a consensus that it takes to reach a new level anytime that we address a concept of this seriousness. Finally, I would like to commend this Board for so willingly coming together in this special called session to address the issues that have been laid before us, fully realizing that some of the issues that we will be addressing during this session may be some of the most important issues we address in the tenure we have as members of the Board of Regents."

President Meredith presented the following background information to set the stage for the presentation:

**I. Why initiate "Moving to a New Level While Keeping Old Traditions"? It's a combination of factors.**

- A. WKU is already very good, but we should seek to be even better.
- B. Society and the General Assembly have been sending messages to higher education for some time that higher education needs to improve, make some changes in the way it does business, and be more accountable. Some of those messages have been painful. For instance, WKU has experienced 13 budget cuts in 10 years and higher education's priority position in the Commonwealth has continued to decline.
- C. The demand for quality and integrity has been increasing in our society on the political scene, in the world of work, and even on the education scene. In the long run, quality is valued and will sell. Why do so many people send their children to schools costing several times the price at Western? Maybe partly for reputation or prestige but mostly for the perception of quality.
- D. WKU needs to continue to increase the marketability of its graduates. "New Level" will give Western the opportunity to produce graduates who will be in even higher demand.
- E. Faculty have been telling me since I arrived that we need to continue to enhance the overall quality of our student body in order to further enhance the University's academic quality.

**2. What has been the process?**

- A. Drafted December 1993.
- B. Reviewed and revised in a day-long retreat with administrators and by the Regents individually in January and February 1994.
- C. Distributed on campus in April 1994 and reviewed at various levels through early November 1994.
- D. Met with superintendents (27) in April 1994 and asked for their comments and concerns. Positive response received.
- E. Met with superintendents (27) in September 1994 to see if there were any new concerns. Positive response received.
- F. Received report from University-wide Summation Committee.
- G. Revised draft redistributed to Deans and Vice President for Academic Affairs in November for review.
- H. Met with Administrative Council and Executive Committee of Faculty Senate on January 20 to discuss admissions standards alternatives.
- I. Met in open campus meeting on February 10 to discuss admission standards alternatives and other aspects of "New Level."
- J. Distributed a final draft to the campus community asking for final comments by February 20.
- K. Met with Executive Officers on February 20.
- L. Met with Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Deans in separate meetings on February 21.
- M. Numerous press interviews for public information.
- N. A last draft was prepared utilizing many of the suggestions that were received.
- O. Board meeting February 24 cancelled.
- P. Since then, all responses have been reviewed again. New memos from constituents were acquired.
- Q. Responded.
- R. Board meeting on March 22.
- S. As a result of this nearly year-long process, we are in general agreement on 32 of the 34 concepts.

**3. Seeking approval for concepts! Is this the right direction?**

If the Board approves "New Level" or any part of it, we will work out the details of how and when as a campus community. The judgement now falls to you as the Governing Board. Is this the direction you want Western to go?

**4. Process for today.**

I will cover each point for you and give you the rationale. Your questions will be addressed to the best of our ability. When we finish, I will ask that you approve "New Level!" You may want to approve it in its entirety or you may want to vote on some parts separately.

The decision is now yours!

President Meredith used overheads to present item by item the 34 concepts in the document which is outlined below. He stated, "I will cover each point for you and give you the rationale. We will address your questions to the best of our ability. When we finish, I will ask that you approve New Level! You may want to do so or you may want to vote on some parts separately.

**Secretary's Note:** Copies of the overheads are filed with the Board's official documents.

## **WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY**

### **Moving to a New Level While Keeping Old Traditions**

#### Background

Western Kentucky University is positioned at this particular time to move to a new level of quality and stature. This administration has long believed that there is a unique position for Western to occupy in higher education in Kentucky. We, as an institution, should not aspire to be another comprehensive research institution. However, there is a niche above the current regional university status that is appropriate for Western.

There is a demand for a higher quality public university in which the faculty and staff focus their energies and talents on the total growth of their students. The values, traditions, and commitment to teaching that Western Kentucky University has always maintained will be a major asset in addressing this demand.

Western made progress toward this goal during the first three years of this administration. Improvement in the quality of students, quality of faculty, and in the general overall image of the institution had Western on the right path. Although the focus of the institution was diverted somewhat for a short period of time, there has been a resurgence in the movement toward this unique position.

This new position has been enhanced by a request from the Governor, and an agreement from the General Assembly and the Council on Higher Education, that our base funding be kept constant and that we receive additional dollars through performance measures. This simply means that Western now will have the flexibility to move forward with quality initiatives without being overwhelmingly concerned about the impact on the enrollment level at the institution. However, any loss in enrollment from this initiative will adversely impact tuition income.

We are also uniquely positioned in that we have our own Western Kentucky University Community College. This entity affords us the opportunity to serve more students than we would have the opportunity to serve within the University. It also allows Western to address the question of access for those students who do not meet the University's standards and to provide a different route into higher education for qualified students. The Community College will serve as a major economic development asset.

Although Western XXI is mentioned only a few times in this paper for emphasis, it serves as the basis for most of the proposals presented herein.

#### Purpose

What is the overall picture of this new Western Kentucky University that is **Moving to a New Level While Keeping Old Traditions?**

It is a university that stands apart through increasing the quality of its incoming freshmen by requiring higher standards and by recruiting more superior students. These better prepared students will be ready and able to move forward at a much faster pace. Their talent will allow Western to require more in terms of developing writing and speaking communication skills, analytical skills, leadership traits, and creative exploration. An academic atmosphere that fosters, recognizes, and rewards student academic success will dominate the campus. There will be a modus operandi of a collegial partnership between faculty and students in learning and research. A greater number of students at the upper end of the academic scale will be recruited. Our graduates will reflect the abilities and values of a graduate of a university in every sense of the word.

### Actions

The quality of a university is directly reflected in the quality of students who comprise the student body. Western now requires a 17 ACT or a 2.2 GPA, plus the pre-college curriculum that is mandated by the Council on Higher Education in order for a student to be admitted. The average entering ACT composite score for all first-time freshmen at Western for fall 1994 was 21.22.

**Western's ACT composite requirement will be increased to 18 in 1996, 19 in 1998, and 20 in the fall of 2000, or students may be admitted with a GPA requirement that will be increased to 2.3 in 1996, 2.4 in 1998, and 2.5 in 2000.**

A sliding scale should be developed for applicants whose ACT scores and GPAs fall below those required. For example, applicants with a 17 ACT in 2000 could be admitted with a 2.8 GPA. An applicant in the same year with a 23 ACT could be admitted with a 2.2 GPA.

It is clear that students exhibit different abilities on tests. An appropriate number of exceptions should be allowed from these standards to address these students as well as those who are exceptionally talented or who have some evidence of a cultural disadvantage. Western will need to make an extra effort to ensure that the institution is more competitive for academically talented minority students.

**Students who have undeclared major status will enter a new University College for advising. Students who have been admitted as exceptions will also enter the new University College.** This latter group will be required to pass certain requirements before fully pursuing their chosen degree programs in order to ensure that students who do not initially qualify for a program are indeed ready for the required rigorous pace.

The portfolio required by KERA should be explored as an additional piece of information to be considered for admission.

**The Community College will assume a much larger role than it currently occupies.** It will move to the site of the Institute for Economic Development and Public Service to more easily accommodate students and to provide a greater identity for its mission. Southcentral Kentucky has a number of counties with the lowest percentage of participation in higher education in the State. An expanded Community College of Western Kentucky University has the potential to address this major shortcoming. The admission standard for the Community College will remain the same. If the Community College is to realize its full potential, an expansion of its offerings must be considered.

Community College enrollees will have their own classes with very few exceptions. In every other respect, these students will be full participating members of the WKU student body.

**With increased standards, the faculty at Western will have to make a commitment to increase the expectations in every class, utilize the latest in instructional technology and techniques, and involve students more explicitly in the learning process.** More writing and communication skills will need to be required in every class. Interdisciplinary barriers will need to be dropped

somewhat as students begin to understand the bigger picture by learning across disciplines. Western XXI calls on the institution to "Encourage the development of interrelationships among the content and insights of courses and disciplines. . . ." As called for in Western XXI, students will be required to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding at the end of every course. The intent will be to make sure that students understand and are able to use the semester's material instead of just learning it to satisfy an immediate need. They will be asked to reach beyond simply having knowledge. They will be asked to apply that knowledge.

The total networking of the campus, planned for completion in the fall of 1995, the placing of a computer on the desk of every faculty member in the fall of 1993, and the computer accessibility afforded each Western student will dramatically enhance communication and the sharing and acquisition of knowledge. All of this opens the door for us to change the way we engage in instruction. **Students are coming to us using information on computers and learning from this activity. We must utilize their interest in the teaching and learning process.**

**Although there have been continued increases in the quality of new faculty coming to Western, that quality will have to be further enhanced.** Existing faculty will have to make a commitment to hire colleagues who have the ability to carry us to the next level.

**Average class sizes will generally need to be reduced where necessary.** This will further enhance our ability to communicate and to provide better learning opportunities through the provision of the kind of instruction and student assessment that one would expect from a high quality university. However, the extent of reduction will vary by discipline.

**Everyone who is involved in classroom instruction will be expected to strive to be an excellent teacher.** Our successful Center for Teaching and Learning is readily available to faculty to ensure this goal. Since Western is a university, every faculty member will be expected to engage in some creative/scholarly activities and public service, in addition to his or her instructional responsibilities. It is important for faculty to stay professionally active and informed about the state of their disciplines so that they can ensure the high quality of the content in their classes. The amount of scholarly activities and public service required from each faculty member in each category will vary depending upon the talents of the individuals and the needs of a particular department. When recruiting faculty members, a department not only will recruit someone for a particular specialty, but it will also recruit for a specific need. A need at one time may be for someone who has outstanding instructional skills, while at another time the need may be for someone who will provide needed assistance in research and publication production or someone with a strong public service orientation.

**Western faculty have been primarily involved in applied research, and that is appropriate. However, those who are involved in basic research will continue to receive encouragement and support.**

Although some attempt has been made to improve the evaluation of teaching and to increase its importance, **it is time for Western to make an institutional-wide commitment to dramatically improve the teaching evaluation and improvement process.** The concept of peer review is universally accepted in evaluating research efforts and should be considered for some role in evaluating teaching. Hopefully, this effort will enhance the concept of departmental and college ownership for success. A task force will be established to assess our system of evaluation by students and to make a recommendation. If budgetarily possible, student evaluations will be conducted each semester.

**Evaluations of faculty and staff must be taken more seriously and in some cases must be more timely.** They must be completed prior to the time salary recommendations are made if they are going to be fully impactful. Evaluations should occur regularly throughout the year and only formalized on the

official university forms at the appropriate time.

**The evaluation process will be designed to call attention to strengths, weaknesses, and to offer a plan for correcting weaknesses. It will also be used as an assessment for promotion, tenure, and/or performance evaluation.** Western's current system of evaluation of faculty does not allow this to happen because of the way student evaluations of faculty are handled. At the present time, only the faculty member sees the detailed results of their evaluation complete with student comments. The department head only sees a summary without any comments. The Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs do not see anything unless the faculty member chooses to let them see it because he/she believes it will help his or her case. This process prevents Western Kentucky University from putting the proper emphasis on teaching excellence. We now appear to take action on an ineffective teacher only when students begin complaining outside of the provided channels. **All elements of an individual's evaluation will be available to that individual's department head, dean, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the President.**

**A new commitment to advising must be made.** Individual evaluations must contain a section on advising students accompanied by some measurement of success. Departments also will be evaluated on this important topic.

Successes and rewards in higher education are typically individually driven. **Although individual merit will still be of primary importance, an equally important element of merit will be the success of a particular department or unit--both academic and nonacademic.** In other words, if a department meets all of the goals that have been set by and for that department, the department, as well as deserving individuals, will share in merit. This should produce a commitment to the overall success of each unit on campus, and since most goals will also relate to the success of the institution, this should help enhance institutional success as well.

**Alternate assignment time (released time) from teaching responsibilities will become a much more valuable commodity that will be granted for significant activities only.** Smaller class sizes, better students, and enhanced support for instruction should make class loads less stressful and more impactful. More faculty will be asked to teach a full load. The preceding should also reduce the need for some part-time faculty. Only the best part-time faculty will be used.

**More definitive work needs to be accomplished in identifying acceptable service.** The variation in interpretations by different departments leads one to suspect that there may be a lack of consistency.

**Evaluations should cover a particular year, but the period for reward will cover a longer time span.** Rewards should cover the work of the current year plus the two previous years. Few faculty have major productions every year. Although teaching must always be high, research and public service are many times cyclical in terms of production because of circumstances beyond the faculty member's control. This plan will provide a leveling effect that will be more realistic and fair.

**New programs should be proposed only if absolutely needed and are within the mission of the University.** An extraordinary case must be made for any other programs. **Graduate programs will continue to play a vital role in the offerings at Western and particularly in support of the undergraduate programs.** They should continue to be monitored closely for effectiveness and viability. It will be far better for Western to have a few excellent graduate programs than to have an expanded number of weaker ones.

**Western should ensure that its students are indeed prepared by taking three significant actions in addition to the comprehensive understanding at the end of every course described earlier. First, a rising junior assessment must be given** to make sure that students have grasped the essentials of their general education core including the ability to write and speak

effectively. Second, **departmental majors should be given a comprehensive assessment early in their final semester** to determine if they have particular shortcomings before entering graduate school or the job market. The department would then offer tutorials during that semester to fill in the gaps. Third, a **"quality assurance" should be issued on all our graduates who have completed a specific major**. It is fully understood that it may be difficult to provide an assurance for some majors, e.g., a General Studies major. It is also understood that this assurance would be limited in its scope.

**Students engaged in study at a top quality university should be strongly encouraged to visit a foreign country with a culture different from their own.** Although our opportunities are increasing in this regard, our numbers are still not impressive. The world is now very small, and we must prepare our graduates to be understanding and flexible in their thinking and decision making. **Additionally, a comprehensive plan must be developed to foster a greater crossover between our native student body and students from foreign countries on our campus.**

**Western's student, faculty, and staff population should be reflective of the race and gender population of Kentucky. The learning and living environment of the campus should represent the diversity of the Commonwealth.**

A university should play a major role in developing attitudes of future members of our society toward others. Therefore, **a requirement for unpaid public service will be a part of our graduation requirements.** In other words, students will have to document a certain number of such unpaid hours before graduation. A process for record keeping and verification will have to be developed; however, an honor system for meeting this requirement should be discussed.

**The culture for our students must be changed in terms of their academic week.** Too many faculty complain that students are not in class on Fridays, and if they are, they come unprepared. The solution to this problem lies entirely in the hands of the faculty. If faculty demand attendance and if faculty demand that students be prepared, students will comply.

**Additional steps must be taken to encourage our students to be here seven days a week** (Preston Center, cable and laundries in residence halls, and increased computer access are current initiatives). This effort must continue with Student Affairs and Academic Affairs playing more central roles.

A comprehensive university **should provide nonacademic credit continuing education opportunities for its many constituents.** There is much to learn, and there is a great desire to learn through this process. It will not be a financial liability to the University but instead will prove to be financially positive. The new home of the Institute for Economic Development provides an ideal, easily accessible location. Our efforts in this regard have previously been constrained by space and lack of parking. The new classrooms for the Community College will be shared with Continuing Education.

Although some progress has been made with the establishment of advisory councils, much remains to be done. **Practically every unit on campus should have an advisory council which has a meaningful role.** If the advisory councils are handled correctly, the benefits are too numerous to mention.

**Institutional Advancement will play an increasingly important role on this campus.** This new Western will prove attractive to many new donors who would not have considered us previously. Everyone on the campus of this University will have a role to play in this regard.

**The intellectual atmosphere on Western's campus must be enhanced.** This will involve a greater effort from the entire campus, led by Academic Affairs, to bring inspirational scholars and leaders to Western for lectures and interaction with our students, faculty, and staff. Outstanding visiting professors,

writers, and artists-in-residence should also be a regular part of our culture. In addition, a formal faculty convocation should be established in late spring for the purpose of hearing an outstanding speaker and giving faculty awards for the year. This should help develop an institutional academic continuity and pride by seeing colleagues honored publicly. The amphitheater would provide an excellent April setting.

**University administrators will further develop an operational mentality oriented toward service and facilitating our educational mission.**

Although recent budget cuts have negatively impacted the ability of University administrators to fulfill their responsibilities, the focus on service to facilitate our educational mission cannot be lost. The "Leadership for the '90s" program is proving to be beneficial but more needs to be done.

**Continued staff development will be crucial to Western's overall success.** More formal and structured efforts must be implemented to accomplish this important function.

Resources

Western's new position could initially produce a negative impact on enrollment and, therefore, reduce tuition income. If this happens, further institutional adjustments will need to be accomplished in order to accommodate this loss. There is no immediate answer for obtaining the resources necessary to complete this plan. However, the new funding model that has been proposed by the State, which stresses retention and graduation rates, should prove beneficial. Our new position should prove attractive for securing private resources which will play a key role in assisting the institution to reach the new level. **It will be imperative that everyone be cognizant of retention and graduation rates and actively involved in the recruitment of excellent students.**

Summary

One of the challenges that leadership faces in any organization is knowing when to make changes in the current structure. Changes made in reaction to a problem are easier to make because everyone can literally see the rationale. However, valuable resources and time are lost in the reactive mode.

Proactive changes are harder to support because the problem has not yet occurred. However, proactive changes save valuable resources and time.

The concepts listed above call for proactive changes.

2/24/95

Following the President's presentation, Board members were given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the document.

Regent Gray introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption by the Board.

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, Western Kentucky University recognizes that the environment in which we live is a very competitive and changing one; and

**FURTHERMORE**, we recognize that it is an environment that must be globally rather than regionally competitive; and

**WHEREAS**, the competitive nature of the world is such that it is necessary for Western Kentucky University to enhance some of the traditional ways in which its students have been educated, its faculty recruited, retained, and

rewarded; and

**WHEREAS**, President Thomas C. Meredith and the University community have proposed such enhancements through a document entitled "*Moving to a New Level While Keeping Old Traditions*," dated February 24, 1995.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Regents of Western Kentucky University approves this conceptual enhancement which will make Western Kentucky University students more globally competitive, and specifically endorses raising the entrance requirements on the ACT to 20 or the GPA to 2.5 by the year 2000; and

- further encourages volunteer public service; and
- further directs the President of the University to continue the development of a more definitive plan which outlines in greater detail actions, strategies, and tactics required to implement these enhancements; and
- further directs the President to indicate the financial impact of these enhancements to the University in both the short and long terms; and
- further directs that this plan and analysis be presented to the Board of Regents in its regular April meeting.

Ordered at Bowling Green, Kentucky, this 22nd day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ninety-five.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Mercer and carried unanimously.

With no further business to come before the Board, motion for adjournment was made by Mr. Mercer, seconded by Mrs. Bale. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.

## **CERTIFICATION OF SECRETARY**

I hereby certify that the minutes herein above set forth an accurate record of votes and actions taken by the Board of Regents of Western Kentucky University in a special meeting held on March 22, 1995, in the Regents Conference Room of the Wetherby Administration Building on the Western campus, and further certify that the meeting was held in compliance with KRS 61.810, 61.815, 61.820, and 61.825 (enacted as Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 of House Bill 100, 1974 Regular Session, General Assembly).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Elizabeth W. Esters  
Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Earl Fischer  
Chairman  
April 21, 1995

\_\_\_\_\_  
Elizabeth W. Esters  
Secretary  
April 21, 1995