

Western Kentucky University
University Senate Special Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2017

A special meeting of the WKU University Senate was called to order on Wednesday, January 25, 2017 by Chair Hudepohl. The meeting was scheduled by the WKU Board of Regents Chair Higdon to introduce the preferred candidate in the WKU Presidential Search, Dr. Caboni, to the University Senate.

The floor was then given to Chair Higdon, who thanked the senators for coming. He gave a shout out to Faculty Regent Burch, who he said did an outstanding job throughout the search process and represented the faculty well. He added that Dr. Burch is a valued member of the Board of Regents.

Chair Higdon then thanked the members of the University Senate for attending and said that we are here to meet Dr. Caboni, who is currently the Vice Chancellor of Public Affairs at the University of Kansas.

An overview of Dr. Caboni's professional milestones was shared with faculty and Dr. Caboni clarified the reasons why he is the right fit for WKU.

Dr. Caboni said that he is happy to meet with the faculty and is impressed with the turnout. He shared some of his professional accomplishments and said that he was there to share what he thinks great universities do.

Dr. Caboni lived on the square at WKU as a student and recognizes that it is a completely different place than when he was here. He added that he thinks Dr. Ransdell has done a terrific job.

He then moved to New Orleans, served in institutional advancement as an Assistant Director of Alumni and Chief of Business in Capital Campaign. He asked why things were done and looked at the research literature and nothing was there. Dave Jones, the Vice Chancellor for Fundraising at Vanderbilt University, recruited Dr. Caboni for the PhD program. There was no program in fundraising, but there was a higher education doctorate, and student affairs and policy work.

The institutional management program had two students it. Dr. Caboni was hired to rebuild this program to 15-20 students each year to study fundraising for universities. Administrators, superintendents, non-profit management attended in the summer to find things to take back. He became an administrator in PR and recruitment for the school (19 programs and 3 doctorate) in addition to a 3/3 load. He did administrative work during the semester, and at the end of the time, he realized he had other aspirations. He thought he would be a dean until the Chancellor of Kansas called him. After doubling the students and moving the school of education for 8 to 1, he went to Kansas.

At Kansas, he reenergized the state in DC, rearticulated who there were as an institution, and who they aspired to be. The time was ideal for him in understanding difficult decisions of the university. He felt that WKU was particularly attractive to him.

Dr. Caboni said that there are three main things that great universities do: (1) inspire innovation; (2) elevate communities; and (3) transform lives. He then articulated various points within this.

He wants graduates to stay here and connect to the community. He then talked about what we do that is innovative and important. He wants WKU to become a nationally recognized and elevated community, a lighthouse to attract people to study, etc., and an anchor for jobs to keep students who want to stay. He used the Medical Center and rural health initiatives as an example. Comparable universities graduate 70%. There is no reason we are not at the top.

Dr. Caboni said that WKU changed his life by putting the Department of Communications theory to practice. The great applied work is something that we need to own in the workplace.

If successful on Friday feels that there will be a period of getting to know one another. He wants to know what we do and will outline a strategic plan. He said that top-down does not work, and bottom-up does not work. He said that we have to do it together – faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors. The vision for the University will be what we create collectively. His vision will be a collective creation of where we want to go and how to get there. He vowed to be transparent and collaborative and said that he wants to work together. He said that he will sit down with the students and the Student Government Association once a month. He said he will hold office hours once a month at the Student Union to demonstrate this commitment and his willingness to listen. He said that he is here to listen, and that conversations are better than sitting behind computers and email. He is open to working together and to elevating the institution.

Dr. Sharon Mutter asked about the budget situation in Kentucky, and how Dr. Caboni will work within these constraints. He said that higher education is changed, and we cannot expect the funding situation to be what it was for the next four years. Public higher education is an individual burden. The annual 5-10% increase in state funding is not coming back. It is a watershed moment for higher education. We have to innovate because the 5% increase from the state won't be there. How will we organize? We will organize by (1) investing in the core; (2) knowing how we do what we do; and (3) addressing challenges. The questions will be answered at the edges of the disciplines and how they intersect, and by thinking of how we can collaborate and work together. He reiterated that we have to do it together. 25% of the freshman class is lost each year. He doesn't care what we do every day; every student we admit needs to graduate in four years. He spoke of the university innovation alliance of peer advising and bridge funding (ie. \$200 to fix a student's car so they can get to campus). He then talked about recruiting outside of Kentucky; this will require articulating what we do special that no one else in the world does. In reflecting on the meaning of "The Spirit Makes the

Master”, what is that other thing? Is it grit? Resilience? Persistence? How do we use that to attract people and how do we deliver on it? The strategies and approaches will be done together. We have to model best practices and decide what to do to make our students successful.

Dr. Molly Kerby asked what his experience is with recruiting for diversity (ie. LGBTQ, people of color, disabilities, etc.). Dr. Caboni responded that first we have to say it is a priority and this starts at the top. Everyone who thinks differently strengthens the classroom. It cannot be just about numbers. Bringing a percentage from 8 to 18% of students of color is unimportant – it is more about inclusivity and making people feel valued. We want to create an inclusive environment where multiple perspectives are supported. We want WKU to be a marketplace of ideas. We want to challenge beliefs, not necessarily change them. The world is becoming more diverse every day. Putting students in situation where they can be challenged is important. Diversity and inclusion as part of our core values needs to be talked about and practiced. Dr. Caboni also spoke of protecting junior faculty who are minorities. Faculty need protection and need to know that services are available. He connected this to persistence. There should not be barriers up. We need to intentionally be a community of success, completion, and be welcoming and supportive.

Dr. Grayson Hunt stated that many of the diverse faculty are being overburdened. The people of color are being overworked. There is no Pride Center, no Black Cultural Center, no Muslim Center. The faculty are working in this capacity to make up for these deficiencies. Dr. Caboni said that it means saying thank you to the faculty who serve in these roles. The model needs to be student success for every student. Every student needs to know where to go for help. Do we want to create one of those resource centers? There is probably not money for that – maybe only one. Dr. Caboni said that WKU will be here for everyone – the faculty, staff, and students. We will be creating a place for everyone, and in committing to student success, no matter where they are from, we have to live this.

Dr. Jennifer Walton-Hanley asked about resources for the three regional campuses to promote an inclusive atmosphere for the regional campuses. Dr. Caboni said that we have a responsibility to bring higher education to them. The experience there has to be the same as here. The location should not matter. He wants us to show who we are no matter where the student is. Any support and services that we have here, they need to have there. Working individuals need a class schedule between 4:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M. It is a different world, a different population – the majority of these students are non-traditional. How do we help people to know what is expected before they get here? As we tell people expectations and educate them. The faculty and staff can tell the students what the expectations are in pursuing a degree that provides aspirations for making a good living and a good life. How we communicate this to them is just as important. It’s true in Bowling Green and everywhere else. In terms of faculty members going out during the semester, these are important conversations between the department chair and the faculty members.

Dr. Dale Rigby asked a question about retention, highlighting the fact that “stuff happens” to students. Would the students benefit from non-punitive policies and frozen transcripts? Dr. Molly Kerby said that she thinks maybe we do that already. Dr. Caboni said he thinks it is not the President’s decision. If we are focused on student success, then it happens invariably. At LSU, Dr. Caboni said that he started out as a music major; following the juries, he got a letter in the mailbox to reconsider his major. He stated that this type of communication often destroys students. In his case, he had good parents and good friends who helped him to cope with this. He said that we want to be mindful and intentional of how our actions affect students.

Dr. Lauren McClain asked a question about shared governance and transparency. She appreciates his commitment to shared governance and transparency. She said that as junior faculty members, we are told that faculty and academics are valued. However, there have been virtually no raises, and the priority of the faculty has not been a priority. She asked how the faculty and academics might be valued.

Dr. Caboni responded that the budget is a value statement about what is important to the institution. He understands that getting only a 3% in raise distributed as 1%, 1%, 1%, in however many years is troublesome. He noted that the faculty members in his current job in Kansas have not had a raise in 7 of 8 years, and (he recognizes that) this affects recruiting and retaining talent. He stated that it is important to review how the money that is spent on administrative efforts can be used most efficiently. We need to be clear on what is the goal and what is important. If 3% a year (for salary increases) is a priority, then we need to talk about how to do that. It appears that annually the university gets a number that we have to cut. How do budgeting decisions work here? Dr. Caboni said he thinks across the board cutting is not strategic. This just means putting cost-cutting on someone else’s shoulder. How do we protect recruitment budgets? Dr. Caboni thinks that marketing is critically important. This unit (marketing) was targeted and the cuts were just handed to the dean and department chairs. The persistence rate needs to increase to improve the retention and graduation rate. How do we reinvest and reallocate? Centralization or de-centralization? At his university, it was determined arbitrarily that the money to be saved each year would be obtained by cutting out \$80,000 from his budget. To protect recruitment, the university made the easy decisions to take 10% off the marketing budget from year to year, thinking that this will not hurt. They also took larger reductions in other places. (Rhetorical question) Where are decisions made in the institution? With targeted budget cuts, how will deans and department chairs manage through it? We are looking through the lens of scarcity vs. success. An example is to consider having an 85% graduation rate and increasing retention. 16% (of our money) comes from the state of Kentucky. We should look at the growth we could have instead of what we will be cutting. Then we look at how to redeploy resources and be more efficient. The University of Kansas had an integrated science building. They were not able to raise the money. The state and the students were not able to help. Innovative thinking about how to reallocate then happened – revenue from parking, residence halls, the power plant, and the student union were used to raise the money to fund this need.

What is the priority and how do we do it? We will not agree on everything. Decisions will be made with consultation and guidance. No consultation means no transparency. Shared governance is important and Dr. Caboni says he respects it. The faculty will have a voice through the strategic planning process.

There are overlapping responsibilities. The department chair is always caught in the middle, making it a win-win job.

Dr. Shura Pollatsek asked about hiring a new provost. This is a huge force in what is essential for the Provost of the University. How do you see working together? Dr. Caboni said he sees it as a team effort. Obligations are to work with the legislature to raise money for everything that is a priority and to get students here. The old model is no longer. For the provost, Dr. Caboni wants someone who will complement his talents and skills and fill in the gaps in his deficiencies. He sees the provost as the Chief Academic Officer and wants an intellectual leader of the faculty working with governance. He will come to meetings each month to be aware of the conversation. He will do some meetings in conjunction with the provost. He wants it to be someone the faculty is comfortable with and can believe in, and someone the faculty and president can help pick. We have to talk about it together. He wants it to be a faculty peer who understands the role of faculty.

Dr. Claus Ernst asked Dr. Caboni what he sees as the role of the University Senate. There are difficult decisions and the senate makes resolutions that are largely ignored. Dr. Caboni said that he sees the senate as an advisory body and also a collaborative body. He thinks it should be a joint effort. He used the resolution on building as an example. There is no way with only state dollars that an institution can grow. To get things done, we have to think innovatively. He thinks if he will make a different decision, he will explain why and then will come back to the faculty to talk some ore. He will be considerate, generous, and honest. He cannot say yes to everything, but will have conversations about it. Shared governance is a give and take.

Dr. Patricia Minter said that the faculty are dealing with the realities of the austere budget. The faculty feels overworked, undercompensated, and they feel erased. She asked Dr. Caboni how he envisions the role of faculty at the university, how he does he see the academic mission, and where does he see it going? He responded that he sees creating interesting programs and engaging students. It has to be an 8:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday place, being present and taking ownership of the academic mission and academic aspirations. He wants the faculty to get together and talk about this. Show up, be part of the conversation around how do we do what we do and how are we going to do it? The faculty needs to be interested and engaged. Faculty life is not a 40-hour work week. Who do we want to be and what are our priorities? How do we inspire students to graduate and finish? He wants to continue the work of the facilities and wants to do that work for the people as well. There is no magic bullet; we have to do it together. Dr. Caboni added that he hopes the faculty got a sense of who he is and he is

appreciative that we could meet with him at the last minute. Decision making takes time, but he wants to work nimbly and quickly and he wants it to happen together.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heidi Álvarez
Secretary