

12-14-1985

UA3/7/4/3 Press Conference

Joe Iracane
WKU Board of Regents

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Western Kentucky University
UA3/7 Kern Alexander Papers
Series 4 Interviews / Oral History
Item 3 Press Conference Recording Transcript

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Biographical/Historical Note:

The president's office was created in 1906. From Donald Zacharias's 1985 summer resignation to the end of the year Paul Cook served as interim president while the Regents searched for the next president. On December 14 Kern Alexander was elected president but because of contract with the University of Florida he would not officially begin his WKU tenure until May 15, 1986. He would serve a brief two years as WKU's president resigning April 11, 1988.

Description: Press conference regarding the selection of Kern Alexander as WKU president. Unidentified reporters talking with Joe Iracane.

Dates: December 14, 1985

Formats: 1 audiotape, 2 wav files, 2 mp3 files

Subject Analytics:

Alexander, S. Kern, Jr. b. 1939
Audio recording
Iracane, Joe
Press conferences
Western Kentucky University

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Oral History Recording List UA3.7.4.3 ~ Records

06/17/2013

Media ID	Side	Start time	Subject
Tape 1	1	00:00:08	<i>Joe Iracane: . . . felt it is necessary for him to sever his relations with the University of Florida. He's going to come immediately to Western. He will be coming Monday and but in the process he will remain on the University of Florida's salary chart. And we at Western will pay him, pay the University of Florida for any compensation missed by him being responsible to Western.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:00:34	<i>Reporter: Does this mean that Dr. Cook now is going to relinquish the interim presidency?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: No we're actually going to work, we're going to deliver Dr. Cook and Dr. Alexander together this week. And we're going to work out that kind of arrangement that they'll both feel comfortable under. I'm not at liberty to say exactly what we're going to do with Dr. Cook, but there will be a press conference forthcoming with a new kind of arrangement that will help us go through this period as a team.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:01:07	<i>Reporter: Who do you anticipate actually sort of carrying flag for the university going into the legislative session?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: I think a combination of Dr. Alexander definitely will be here throughout the legislative period and I think he will counsel with Dr. Cook over the fact that he has some previous experience with the legislators, but I, Dr. Alexander will be here through the legislative session.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:01:33	<i>Reporter: But in title he will not be the president until the fifteenth of May, am I correct about that?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: Well, I don't, that remains to be seen. I would say that he's the president as of right this second you know, but we're going to work out the transition as smoothly as we possibly can, but in the time frame that we have at this point, it's difficult for us to get all the transition numbers together and how we're going to handle it. But Dr. Alexander will be available for Western immediately.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:02:04	<i>Reporter: So there is some possibility that he actually would assume the title of president prior to the actual date of that contract then?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: Well, that's, you know, I don't know, that's a difficult question and I'm not trying to avoid, yes, I understand as far as . . .</i> <i>Reporter: It's somewhat confusing</i> <i>Joe Iracane: He's going to be president as far as the compensation we're not sure about that part of it and how we're going to handle it, but yes he's going to be president right away.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:02:33	<i>Reporter: What would Dr., is that effective today upon the adoption then of this resolution today? Has he become president?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: That's, I don't know I might you know, I would say yes but you know, but effective his contract period will be May the fifteenth. Yes.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:02:49	<i>Reporter: So he's really sort of . . . What about Dr. Cook's title then?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: We haven't worked that out at this point. We're going to work it out. That, that's in the next press conference. I'm meeting with them tomorrow and hopefully we can have a press conference either Monday or Tuesday.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:03:07	<i>Reporter: But you would expect, for example Dr. Alexander . . .</i> <i>Joe Iracane: I expect Dr. Alexander to take charge right away</i> <i>Reporter: And to be up in Frankfort . . .</i> <i>Joe Iracane: Yes sir, yes sir.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:03:15	<i>Reporter: What will the salary be?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: 75</i>
Tape 1	1	00:03:19	<i>Abrupt change in tape - someone setting up the recording.</i>

Media ID	Side	Start time	Subject
Tape 1	1	00:03:22	<i>Joe Iracane: I think his vision for Western, he had a, he has a lot of insight and vision. He had the traditions of Western at heart, but he's enthusiastic. He has been all over the country in advisory capacity. I think he has some interesting concepts that Western is ready for.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:03:49	<i>Reporter: What are those?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: Oh, just different things as far as expanding and generating excellence within our programs that we have in place, stimulating fundraising, stimulating recruiting. I think that's one of the main points that he had, you know, let's get more people on campus. He's innovative, both in the recruiting aspect as well as the fundraising and constantly building on what we have here to make it even better.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:04:25	<i>Reporter: Was there any concern about his withdrawal from the field the last time? Was that a negative against him at all in the deliberations?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: We tried to handle both he and Dr. Cook as a new person. We didn't, we didn't put any predetermined tags on either one of them. The fact that Cook was an in-house candidate, we eliminated that fact to a certain degree as best you possibly can. As far as Kern being a former candidate that had some negative feedback we talked about it and I talked about it to him, but then at that point I didn't never bring that back out to the Board. You know, let's disregard what has happened. The past is the past, let's go on from there.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:05:16	<i>Reporter: Were they in fact the final two that were really considered?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: Yes.</i> <i>Reporter: It did come down to a choice between Cook and Alexander?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: Well, no, I can't say that. I think, I don't think we ought to get into that because I don't want to offend any of the five. But I think there was a choice of three.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:05:34	<i>Reporter: Who were the three?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: Well I don't think we ought to say that. That wouldn't be fair to the candidates to say who were three that eliminate two. So three, we voted on three.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:05:45	<i>Reporter: Did you like the idea that he wasn't going to, said that he did not want, that he wants to get away from calling Western a regional, is that one of things that you like?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: As far as the regional university concept, that regional university concept offends me, the word regional. But as far as what we see is Western does certain things well and we want to build on what we do well. If you want to call it regional, fine. We think we have a state-wide, mission, so, you know, we don't want to be all things to all people. But yet we want to do, we want to be the best at what we do, and basically that's where he's coming from and that's what really affected the way I felt about him. You know, but the word regional to me is very misleading, you know, to me personally.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:06:30	<i>Reporter: Someone mentioned a while ago that . . . a one, two punch. Is that going to be something that Dr. Cook will work with him. . .</i> <i>Joe Iracane: I think so, yes. Yes. Yes.</i>
Tape 1	1	00:06:40	<i>Reporter: Any idea of what beyond after May fifteenth his role will be at this university?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: I think that we're going to decide what kind of a role within the next two or three weeks.</i>
Tape 1	2	00:00:14	<i>Reporter: Did you like the idea that he wasn't going to, said that he did not want, that he wants to get away from calling Western a regional, is that one of things that you like?</i> <i>Joe Iracane: As far as the regional university concept, that, the regional university concept offends me, the word regional. But as far as what we see, is Western does certain things well and we want to build on what we do well. If you want to call it regional, fine. We think we have a statewide mission, so we don't want to be all things to all people. But yet we want to do, we want to be the best at what we do, and basically that's where he's coming from and that's what really affected the way I felt about it. But the word regional to me is very misleading to me personally.</i>
Tape 1	2	00:00:56	<i>Reporter: Someone mentioned a while ago that . . . a one, two punch. Is that going to be something that Dr. Cook will work with him. . .</i> <i>Joe Iracane: I think so, yes. Yes. Yes.</i>

Media ID	Side	Start time	Subject
Tape 1	2	00:01:07	<p><i>Reporter: Any idea what beyond, after May 15th what his role will be at this university?</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: I think that we're going to decide that kind of role within the next 2 or 3 weeks. I think that we're in a position of making some adjustments in our overall structure. We've had three major retirements. We anticipate some other things, so I think Dr. Cook will have to help as far as the professional person on our campus to blend the old with the new.</i></p>
Tape 1	2	00:01:36	<p><i>Reporter: Would you expect him to remain more within the administrative structure rather than return to his, I believe he's a tenured history professor?</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: Oh yes, he will definitely will remain in the administrative structure. To what level at this point I'm not at liberty to say, but we have. He definitely will remain in administrative.</i></p>
Tape 1	2	00:01:54	<p><i>Reporter: He's agreed to that? He's already . . .</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: He, Dr. Cook has agreed to serve in whatever capacity he feels the university needs him. He's very acceptable and he understood the situation and he said whatever is best for Western will be best for Dr. Cook. So I must say that he in a very professional manner looked at what he could do for Western and he will deliver those kind of service.</i></p>
Tape 1	2	00:02:20	<p><i>Reporter: Has Dr. Alexander indicated how long he is willing to stay here?</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: Forever.</i></p> <p><i>Reporter: Forever?</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: That's the indication he gave me, forever.</i></p>
Tape 1	2	00:02:29	<p><i>Reporter: He'll stay here until retirement?</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: His indication was that this is where he wants to be and he has no aspirations of going anywhere else. That he wants to remain in Kentucky and if we'll have him he'll stay forever.</i></p>
Tape 1	2	00:02:42	<p><i>Reporter: Is that one of the things you were looking for?</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: Not necessarily. I, you know I learned something from the screening committee that life of a president innovative ideas and those kinds of things and this was a consideration is normally between 7 to 10 years, so and Kern has more than 7 to 10 years left, so I can't say that was a consideration that I personally felt was necessary for him to be considered as president.</i></p>
Tape 1	2	00:03:07	<p><i>Reporter: Was a strong Kentucky tie either in the fact that one was a native of Kentucky or had a degree from Western, was that an overriding consideration this time? There's been a good deal of speculation that that was a major factor.</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: No, no. We tried to be very objective in delivering the president. And I think Kern had all the things. First we got a letter from the faculty regarding what they felt was important to Western. We want this to be . . . he had all of those kinds of credentials. So he met all the five criteria set by the faculty. Second we had certain criterias[sic] that we wanted to meet. He met those criterias [sic], so as far as Kentucky ties were concerned that might be icing on the cake, but it wasn't necessarily the cake.</i></p>
Tape 1	2	00:03:55	<p><i>Reporter: Mr. Iracane, one other thing there had been quite a few of expressions of support for Dr. Cook both in the community and on the campus and there has been some speculation that he didn't get the job whomever came in might encounter some people at least at the beginning who might not be as receptive as you might like. Do you see that as being a problem now that Dr. Cook, as he has been here so long and he did have a lot of support . . .</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: Well, I mean you would have to understand that Dr. Cook would have support because he's here and he's a known and the others are unknown, but anyone that, y'know, your initial question said would we have any problem with that, if anyone has that kind of a problem then they don't have the best interest of Western at heart, so I don't anticipate, I anticipate the transition being very smooth. In talking with Dr. Cook, he was extremely willing to do whatever was best for Western so if there is any negative about it then I think that the person that would be or people who could be do not have the best interest of Western at heart.</i></p> <p><i>Reporter: Thank you.</i></p> <p><i>Joe Iracane: You're welcome.</i></p>