Moving forward

Bowling Green, WKU will benefit greatly from tax increment financing district

On behalf of the faculty, staff, students and alumni of Western Kentucky University, I write in support of the signature tax increment financing district for our community.

WKU has been encouraging leaders throughout Bowling Green for the past several years to identify developers to help bridge the WKU campus and downtown Bowling Green. Thanks to the wisdom of the Kentucky General Assembly and to the commitment on the part of a lot of people, we now have one project ready to transform our community and to engage the WKU campus into a higher quality of life in the heart of our community.

WKU's interest stems from six overriding outcomes which the Signature TIF will achieve:

1. It will improve a severely depressed area directly adjacent and to the north of the WKU campus. This area poses a significant safety problem for the campus as it is one of Bowling Green's highest crime-ridden areas. The housing in this area currently consists mostly of substandard rental properties.

2. As the TIF unfolds, it will serve as a magnet to attract faculty, staff and students into the downtown area to drive consumerism with the newly developed retail enterprises. An important key to the success of the TIF is fully engaging the university community in the TIF footprint.

3. The TIF, therefore, becomes a very important selling point for WKU to attract nationally competitive faculty and staff and to recruit the best and brightest students from Kentucky and beyond. Because of the TIF, Bowling Green and the university can become one community and present a much improved destination point for people who we are trying to attract to WKU.

4. We have serious parking problems on the WKU campus. Because we are located on a hill, we must look to the periphery of the campus for parking relief. We desperately need greater commuter parking capacity. WKU's commitment to lease 200 parking spaces in the TIF developed parking garage is critical to our overall parking plans. If we have a commuter parking capacity within the TIF in the downtown area, then it gives us a reason to also bring the WKU shuttle buses downtown to bring people back and forth between campus and the downtown parking garage.

5. WKU will use the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center (SkyPAC) for large-scale performances, which cannot be accommodated in WKU's Van Meter Hall (which is also part of a TIF) and fit the entertainment/artistic nuance of the TIF. Van Meter Hall, at one end of the TIF, will accommodate small performances and student-related events. SkyPAC, at the other end of the TIF, will accommodate large-scale performances, some sponsored by WKU. The WKU baseball team will also use the baseball stadium for some rival games and tournaments. It will also position us, for the first time in our history, to make a run at hosting the NCAA Regional Championship post-season tournaments.

6. Perhaps the most important aspect of the TIF, as it relates to WKU, is the residential elements in the TIF. With the TIF, we have the opportunity to create a classic college-centered residential community. Some of the housing in the TIF will be aimed at young professionals - many of whom will be assistant or associate professors and early to mid-career staff. Such opportunities as those planned in the TIF are quite limited in Bowling Green today. At the other end of the spectrum, some of the TIF residential community will be aimed at retired faculty, staff, alumni and friends who want to retire in a university community and either remain in or become fully engaged in university life. Our plans call for owners of the residential units in the TIF to have access to all campus events, including athletic, academic, dramatic, musical, cultural, etc. People living in these units will have the opportunity to attend guest lectures across the campus, audit classes, access our Health and Activity Center for physical fitness, and to have access to our campus Health Clinic for routine health care needs. The university becomes the magnet to fill the housing in the TIF. It also becomes a major selling point for keeping people in Bowling Green, and either bringing them back, or bringing them here for the first time.

The Bowling Green Signature TIF is being called the WKU Gateway to Downtown Bowling Green because it involves hospitality, entertainment, arts, residential and retail trade elements within one high-energy district, which bridges the WKU campus and the downtown area. This signature TIF will eliminate much of the plight of a depressed economic area, which separates the campus and the downtown area. WKU is grateful to the city and county and the developers for the project and to all the parties who are willing to bring housing, retail operations, hotels, arts facilities and parking to the TIF district. I am proud of Mayor Elaine Walker and Judge-Executive Mike Buchanon for bringing the master developer to the table and coordinating the university's interest in this project.

Bowling Green is a unique community. The spirit of cooperation and teamwork is unparalleled in Kentucky. Our population growth is high. Our unemployment is low. One would be hard pressed to find a community with more potential for economic growth than Bowling Green in the next few years. Much of that is dependent upon the approval of this signature TIF. Thank you to all decision makers for consideration of this gateway project.

Gary Ransdell is president of Western Kentucky University.

JAN 06 2008
Daily News

Spotlight

GARY RANSDELL
Ransdell reappointed to Fed Reserve branch

Gary A. Ransdell, president of Western Kentucky University, has been reappointed to a three-year term on the board of directors of the Louisville Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Ransdell is also a member of the board of directors of the Intermodal Transportation Authority, the Regional Advisory Board of BB&T Bank and the executive committee of the Sun Belt Conference.

With branches in Little Rock, Louisville and Memphis, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis serves the Eighth Federal Reserve District, which includes all of Arkansas, eastern Missouri, southern Indiana, southern Illinois, western Kentucky, western Tennessee and northern Mississippi.

The St. Louis Fed is one of 12 regional reserve banks that, along with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., comprise the Federal Reserve System.
Ransdell deserving of retention

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell has done an outstanding job since coming here in 1997 and it is very appropriate that the board of regents took action to retain him for 15 more years.

On Friday, the regents approved an addendum to Ransdell’s contract, extending his employment in four-year increments pending satisfactory annual reviews.

Since coming to the university, Ransdell has initiated capital campaigns instrumental in raising millions of dollars for the university, has been responsible for overseeing several new facilities on the campus along with a noticeable upgrade in the appearance of the campus.

In accomplishing this, Ransdell has demonstrated that he has a vision of what Western Kentucky University can become and the ability and energy to ensure it happens.

But most important, he has put Western on a course toward national prominence, leaving behind its reputation as a regional university.

Our view

A former president of an out-of-state university who is familiar with what Ransdell has accomplished here, noted that WKU’s president has “raised the bar for fundraising in Kentucky.”

As part of the contract, Ransdell will receive annual adjustments to his salary, currently, $351,561, as well as longevity incentives: a 15 percent salary increase in 2012 and another 10 percent in 2017.

He will also receive other incentives such as a non-qualified, deferred compensation trust through the College Heights Foundation. The university will also pay $5,000 a year in long-term health care insurance for Ransdell and his wife, Julie.

We look forward to having Ransdell around Bowling Green for another 15 years. He has made no secret of his desire to end his career here and we applaud the board for taking action to make that happen.
Ransdell in place for next 15 years

Board of Regents gives president big vote of confidence by extending stay, pending review every four years

By NATALIE JORDAN
The Daily News
njordan@bgdailynews.com/783-3343

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell is now in position to lead the university until 2022.

The university’s Board of Regents on Friday approved an addendum to Ransdell’s contract, extending his employment in four-year increments pending satisfactory annual reviews, board chairwoman Lois Gray said.

“It’s imperative for him to be on board with the transformations taking place on this campus,” Regent Yevette Haskins said.

As of July 1, Ransdell’s base salary was $351,561, said Bob Skipper, media relations director for the university.

Under the amended contract, Ransdell—who became WKU’s president in 1997—will receive annual adjustments to his salary, as well as longevity incentives: a 15 percent salary increase in 2012 and another 10 percent increase in 2017.

Ransdell will also receive other incentives: the WKU Foundation has established a non-qualified, deferred compensation trust for Ransdell. The trust, through the College Heights Foundation, will be funded by annual $50,000 payments from

See REGENTS, 5A
Jumping

David Elson also parachuted. Above: Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell jumps Tuesday as he parachutes from a plane with the Army's Golden Knights at Fort Knox. Below: WKU football coach David Elson also was strapped to a Golden Knights parachute as he lands at the Army base.

Jumps thrill president, coach

By NATALIE JORDAN

May 1, 2007

FORT KNOX — Jumping at 13,000 feet, free falling until the chute opens at roughly 5,000 feet and it was all about the arch.

Three of Western Kentucky University's own — President Gary Ransdell, football coach David Elson and Amanda Lich, director of development for the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences — made tandem jumps Tuesday at Fort Knox Army base with the U.S. Army parachute team, the Golden Knights.

"If you're feeling good, we'll be on the ground in a minute, but if you're feeling nauseous, we'll take another approach and be on the ground in maybe three minutes," said Sgt. First Class William Vansorden, called Billy V. "Just be concerned about arching, the rest we'll talk you through."

The three jumped on behalf of the university's ROTC program. Ransdell said ROTC officers asked if he'd be interested and he accepted.

"I'm proud of that program," he said. "This is neat, and I'm very excited to do this."

Starting at Goddarm Airfield, the three — all armed with red WKU hand towels — suited up in yellow sky diving suits and later were paired with the professionals.

See JUMPS, 6A

"I'm really excited," Lich said. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I'll be 30 this year, so this is my gift to myself.

I've done some opportunities you don't get offered a lot, and I get to do this with the best of the best. I'm pumped. I'm ready to roll."

The jumps were split because everyone couldn't jump at once. Each jumped at 13,000 feet, free falling at 120 mph. Once the canopy opened, they drifted down at 16 feet a second.

While Ransdell and Lich came down in the second jump, Elson was the first Hilltopper to hit the grassy landing site.

"That was incredible. Talk about an adrenaline rush. That's an experience," Elson said. "I was thinking, 'I can't believe I'm doing this.' It was almost surreal.

And it was all about the arch." Lich said "it was beautiful.

She said the first 30 seconds went by fast, but she'd definitely do it again.

"I saw the gold depository from up there," Ransdell said. "It's fascinating from the air. You can see the view going up in the plane, but when you're coming down, you don't think about that view, and when the chute opened, it was like everything was still. You're falling and the wind ... you just want it to last."

The Golden Knights does promotional jumps once or twice a year at the base, said Ted Burch, assistant operations officer for the accession support brigade.

The Golden Knights perform at air shows, compete on an international level and perform high-profile tandems. They also visit high schools and work with local recruiters, showing students the opportunities the Army has for them.

"There are a lot of things the Army does, and this is just one of them," Burch said. "And this provides an experience for those who jump that they'll never forget. It's one way to build relationships with the community."

The three received a DVD of their sky dive from start to finish and a certificate.

Ransdell said he'll be challenging the university's vice presidents to do this.

"There's value in making a decision and being focused," he said. "And that's a direct analogy to leadership."
WKU president, wife advise on dressing for success

He likes two-button suits and keeps breath spritzer on hand, since he greets people all the time.
That's something you may not have known about Gary Ransdell, the president of Kentucky's fastest growing university, Western Kentucky University, who, along with his wife, Julie, took some time out last week to show students how to dress for success at an event sponsored by Western's Students in Free Enterprise.

The Ransdells, who spend most of their time going to banquets and functions on behalf of the university, said it's always better to err on the side of conservative when dressing for a business environment.

They had several things to say about what and what not to wear, coupled with anecdotal examples, but both agreed personality can take you far.

"A smile and an engaging personality overcomes a lot," Gary Ransdell said. "Charisma is a combination of style and substance."

From ankle socks to bracelets, the Ransdells remarked on a variety of apparel.

"An employee at a senior position at this university was in my office about a year ago. He crossed his legs and had white ankle socks on at this meeting. All I could think of was those socks. That's the only thing I remember from that meeting," Ransdell said.

"It's the little touches in an outfit that can make all the difference," said Julie Ransdell, who mentioned she prefers a firm, "web-to-web" handshake from interviewees.

Less is more, and make sure to have a lint brush handy.

"Make sure to look at yourself from the rear," when getting dressed, she said.

Hair: "The problem with long hair is

See IMPRESSIONS 2B
Moving forward

Senate bills would boost science, mathematics and move Western ahead

WKU is transforming from a regionally important institution into a leading American university with international reach. In Frankfort this month, two bills were introduced that could transform mathematics and science education for Kentucky and facilitate the achievement of WKU’s vision as well.

Senate Bill 1 would create the Advanced Placement incentive fund to encourage schools to establish and expand AP courses in calculus, physics and chemistry and would provide monetary rewards to teachers whose students score high on AP exams. It would also provide supplemental awards to high-achieving students through the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship, or KEES.

Senate Bill 2 would require local school districts, under certain circumstances, to provide salary supplements of up to $6,000 to those teachers.

WKU supports both bills to provide incentives to teachers and reward high schools for academic achievement as part of Kentucky’s efforts to boost science and mathematics.

Kentucky has made great strides in educational achievement in the past two decades, but much work remains as our state transforms to a knowledge-based economy.

If Kentucky students are to succeed in the global economy, they need rigorous courses in mathematics and science. And they need highly qualified teachers providing cutting-edge instruction in the areas of mathematics, physics and chemistry.

The incentive proposals show Kentucky is committed to improving not only the quality of instruction for its students but the quality of life for its residents.

The state has invested in education reform at all levels and has provided funding to develop programs of distinction at universities and to improve research opportunities. At WKU, we’ve leveraged our intellectual capital and the state’s investments in new programs and new facilities to drive the region’s economy. We are using hands-on applied research, especially in the sciences, to identify and solve problems across our region.

Senate Bills 1 and 2 also support WKU’s emphasis on gifted education.

WKU is home to the Center for Gifted Studies, which provides academic programs for high achieving youth and provides professional development and training for Advanced Placement teachers.

This fall the Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky, another program that wouldn’t be possible without legislative support, will open. While located on the WKU campus, the academy is a statewide program that will bring 120 of the state’s most gifted and talented high school juniors and seniors to Bowling Green for two years.

When they complete the program, they will be high school graduates and will have two years of college credit from WKU.

These students, we hope, will remain in Kentucky to finish their degrees and then find jobs or create their own jobs to solve tomorrow’s problems. These bright, young minds will drive Kentucky’s economy in the future.

But educational opportunities won’t be limited to the academy. The incentives proposed in these two bills show our teachers and our students that Kentucky is serious about making the commitment to science and mathematics instruction.

At WKU, we support improved educational opportunities and a better quality of life for Kentuckians and we support these legislative measures.

Editor’s note: Ransdell is president of Western Kentucky University.
Federal Reserve Bank names Ransdell to board

By the Daily News

The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis named Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell to its Louisville Branch board of directors.

Ransdell will fill the unexpired term of his friend and Western Regent Cornelius Martin who was killed in a vehicle accident June 3.

Ransdell is also a director of the College Heights Foundation, a director of the Inter-Modal Transportation Authority and a member of the distance learning advisory committee of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

With branches in Little Rock, Louisville and Memphis, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis serves the Eighth Federal Reserve District, which includes all of Arkansas, eastern Missouri, southern Indiana, southern Illinois, western Kentucky, western Tennessee and northern Mississippi.
President’s feet firmly planted on Hill

Class of 1973 graduate hopes to make Western his final professional stop

By BRIAN WHITE
The Daily News

Gary Allen Ransdell, the nine-year president of Western Kentucky University, hopes that his job interviews with the school’s board of regents in 1997 were the last he’ll ever have to face.

Ransdell, who has overseen dramatic changes at Western on its campus, in its student body and at the bank, wants to end his career at the university. He plans to continue to oversee the transformation the board charged him to make, and his thoughts go as far into the future as 2022.

“I have no need for a resume anymore,” Ransdell said in an interview this month.

In fact, the copy of his curriculum vitae — the academic version of a resume — provided to the Daily News hasn’t been updated since 2003.

Were he to do so, there are many changes Ransdell could list as ones he has pushed for.

The board of regents charged Ransdell to “lead the university through a transformation” when it hired him in 1997, he said.

Once he took on the job, he identified several areas that he thought were in the most need of change, including the physical campus and the school’s finances.

In July, the end of Ransdell’s ninth year as president, $176.1 million in construction projects had been completed, another $15 million were under way and $201.4 million were planned to begin over the next four years.

The university’s financial situation has changed dramatically as well. Its endowments stood at $88 million in August, up from $18 million in 1997. And the school’s budget has doubled in size, but greatly cut its dependence on Kentucky’s General Assembly for support.

The past

When Ransdell, who grew up in Louisville, was an undergraduate student studying mass communications at Western in the early 1970s, he wasn’t sure what he wanted to do after graduation, but being president of a university wasn’t among the possibilities he considered.

“I don’t think as a student you can say, ‘I want to be a president of a university’,” Ransdell said.

He earned a bachelor’s in mass communication from Western in 1973 and a master’s in public administration from Indiana University in 1978.

Ransdell then moved on to SMU (Southern Methodist University) in Dallas, where he worked from 1981 to 1987 as the director of alumni relations.

After Ransdell returned to Western in 1995 to become the university’s vice president for advancement, he was named interim president in 1997 after the resignation of past president Fred H. Brown.

Ransdell is Western’s 17th president and is scheduled to retire in July.

When the position of president opened at Western, it coincided with the time Ransdell felt he was ready to lead a university. He felt lucky that he had the opportunity to apply for such a job at Western.

“When you come down to it, circumstances dictated where,” Ransdell said.

There were too many factors way beyond your control that determined whether you can do this at your alma mater or not.”

When he applied for the presidency, he wanted to come in and do more than just manage his old university, so he wanted to make sure “the board was ready and Western was ready for something bold.”

“Undergraduate admissions was a job he had been thinking about doing for a decade and a half,” Ransdell said.

He had experience away from the order to ever have any chance of achieving that goal, here or anywhere else,” Ransdell said.

His first university job away from the Hill was at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, where he worked from 1981 to 1987 as the director of alumni relations.

Ransdell has been president of Western Kentucky University since 1997.

For his work as president, Ransdell has been named Western Kentucky University president emeritus.

If he was hired as president, he planned to make big changes, and hoped
RANSDELL, from 4

If the board wasn’t insisting on transformation and if the campus wasn’t ready to achieve a bold vision, then it would have been very frustrating,” Ransdell said. “Fortunately, those circumstances were in place, in fact, the board was insisting on it.”

Once he was hired in 1997, it was time to take action. “The thing that was most painful was that we had a tired, complacent and deteriorating campus,” Ransdell said. Since 1997, new buildings have risen, including the Mass Media and Technology Hall and the large parking garage next to E.A. Diddle Arena.

Other structures were gutted and updated to meet the demands of 21st century students. That included a $55 million renovation of the dorms, and $32 million in changes to the school’s dining facilities.

Current projects range from aesthetic improvements like new landscaping in the heart of campus to renovations of Florence Schneider Hall to turn it into the home of the new Kentucky Math and Science Academy.

Less obvious than the physical problems, but just as troubling to Ransdell, were the university’s finances. The school had little history of donations that helped support it, few government grants and contracts and a budget that relied on the state for half its funding.

“A public university cannot achieve greatness on taxpayer dollars alone, yet Western had spent most of its first 100 years totally dependent on the General Assembly,” Ransdell said.

So he launched a capital campaign that raised $102 million in donations, and the endowment grew from $16 million in 1997 to $88 million today.

More controversially, Ransdell also pushed aggressive increases in tuition, from $2,334 a year for a Kentucky student in 2000 to $5,952 this year, an average increase of 22.3 percent a year.

But Western was “significantly undervalued” among similar students, faculty and staff tour the new Mass Media and Technology Hall on Oct. 22, 2004.

Western’s budget swelled from $230 million this year from about $330 million in Ransdell’s first year as president. Much of that was fueled by the institution increases.

Consequently, Western has freed itself from dependence on the General Assembly, which gave little new money to state universities from 2000 to 2005. Ransdell said, half the $130 million budget, about $67 million, was state money.

Today, the $176.6 million in state appropriations makes up only 26 percent of Western’s budget.

“The reason that’s relevant is because we can control the other variables,” Ransdell said.

Those include tuition, donations, federal grants and auxiliary revenue from the dining halls, dorms and campus bookstores, he said.

Western’s tuition now pays it at the right place in the hierarchy of the state’s public universities, Ransdell said.

“Now we’re placed where we need to be,” he said. “Just under UK and U of L, but higher than the other universities in state, and almost the average of the state that surround us.”

The price increase hasn’t hurt enrollment. In fact, Western has grown from 14,573 in Ransdell’s first year to 18,645 in 2005. And the number of applicants has almost doubled from the 6,000 who vied for a spot at Western in 1997. Ransdell said.

“When we were going through dramatic tuition increases, we saw a spike in the number of students applying to Western, and I’m convinced that students are smart consumers and they will buy quality,” he said.

The future.

Today, Western continues to grow and change, though enrollment has modestly leveled over the past three years and the state has put caps on future tuition increases.

More than $300 million in construction is underway or planned to begin before 2010, although much of that depends on state approval.

The board of regents is poised to vote on a proposal to move Western’s football team from Division I-AA to I-A, a move Ransdell has been promoting since August.

The move, which has drawn criticism from faculty, would take the Hilltoppers to college football’s most competitive level, which is what Ransdell said he wants for every part of the university.

If Western is to become “nationally prominent,” a theme Ransdell often returns to when speaking of change, all its programs must be in the top rank, he said.

We limit that opportunity if, by university policy, we tell any program at WKU, athletic or otherwise, that you must perform at a secondary level, then you may not, by university policy, perform at the highest level,” Ransdell said.

When looking to the future, Ransdell does not list athletic accomplishments among the benchmarks he hopes to achieve. But he has set a list of measurable goals he wants to achieve by 2012. Among them:

• Increasing enrollment to 20,000 students.
• Growing the endowment to $200 million.
• Finishing $340 million in construction since 1997, including the completed and planned projects.
• Building a “world-class honors program.”

As to the more-distant future, by 2017 Ransdell would like to see Western become “more selective” while maintaining enrollment and see the campuses in Owensboro, Elizabethtown and possibly Glasgow become more fully developed. Ransdell even hinted that he has some ideas about 2022, but said those were too distant and speculative to put out in public for now.

At that point, Ransdell said, United would be 71 and have been president for 25 years. It would be a term second in length only to founder Henry Hardin Cherry, who was president from the school’s founding in 1906 until his death in 1937.

By then, Ransdell sees a Western that will have met the board of regents’ challenge to change, and Ransdell’s oft-repeated desire to make the school “a leading American university with international reach.”

And he can’t imagine a better way to spend the coming decades: “I’m going to see this transformation through and complete my career at WKU.”
Ransdell has been good for Western

Every university president deals with a variety of constituents, including faculty, staff, students, alumni and donors. And, most of that interaction is no doubt dealing with complaints and criticism.

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell is no exception, and during Thursday’s fall convocation, he took the opportunity to respond to some of that criticism.

Specifically, Ransdell addressed those who have said “the job of president involves more than just raising money and building buildings.”

Ransdell said part of that statement is true, but that he would add three things to his job description: defining and sustaining a vision for the university, leading a strategic plan and dealing with internal and external politics.

But, he said, in the end “it will indeed come down to raising public and private money and building and renovating buildings.”

We agree with Ransdell.

Since coming to the university in 1997, Ransdell has been one of the best presidents we can remember. The school’s endowment has grown dramatically, up to $86 million as of June 30 this year. Ransdell has in fact raised the bar since his arrival in this state in the area of higher education fundraising.

The university also has $341 million in current and ongoing construction projects at the main campus and three of its satellite campuses.

Enrollment continues to set records. Academic programs continue to earn national recognition. And the university is a major contributor to the vitality of its community.

But, at a time when state government support for higher education is falling short, the need for aggressive fundraising becomes even more important, which is exactly what Ransdell is doing.

This speaks volumes about the determination that Ransdell has in making Western the best it can be.

Through his leadership, the university continues to be a player on the state and national level as far as academics and athletics.

Ransdell said it best when he said to the faculty and staff, “Trust me to do what I do well. I am going to trust you to do what you do well.”

Western has a huge impact on Bowling Green economically. Its existence also enhances the intellectual, cultural and artistic life of the community. The many different nationalities and races that attend Western add to our diversity.

We have no problem with staff and faculty criticizing Ransdell; in fact, open dialogue is part of campus life and we commend Ransdell for taking on his critics in an open forum and sharing his thoughts. This is what makes universities like Western and others across the country so special.

Another issue discussed at the convocation was the possibility of Western moving from Division I-AA to I-A football.

We believe that Western should be very deliberate in deciding whether to make the move, and the idea of forums to discuss the issues is appropriate.

These discussions, as well as internal studies, should cover all aspects of this move, including cost, revenue and attendance.

Currently, Western’s football stadium is often short of capacity during its games, so the impact of I-A football on attendance will be on many people’s minds. Would switching to I-A change that?

While athletics adds considerably to a university’s allure and to campus life, academics must always come first.
The president of Western Kentucky University addressed criticism of his focus on fundraising and construction in his annual speech today.

His emphasis on those areas had drawn criticism from some faculty and staff who said that "the job of president is not just raising money and building buildings," he said.

"I have thought a lot about that statement," Ransdell said to a mostly packed Van Meter Auditorium. "It is true to a degree, but, to get to the heart of the job description, I would add three things: Defining and sustaining a vision for the university, leading a strategic plan and dealing with internal and external politics."

But in the end, "it will indeed come down to raising public and private money and building and renovating buildings," he said.

"If I am not doing those two things, then I am not playing to my strengths, and WKU is not getting its money's worth," Ransdell said.

Raising money allows Western to pursue its goals, fund the work of the faculty and improve what the campus offers in terms of facilities and resources, he said. It is the president who can raise the funds and support for a university to be better, Ransdell said.

"I cannot, however, help you teach and conduct research in your respective disciplines," he said. "I cannot personally strengthen our academic quality. It is my job to ensure that we have a campus capable and an environment suitable enough for you to build a strong academic community. It is you who will achieve our vision."

Ransdell asked the employees to "trust me to do what I do well. I am going to trust you to do what you do well."

In addition to continuing construction, Western will have discussions about the football program and put an emphasis both on academic programs for highly talented students and on programs that serve the community, Ransdell said.

For several years, there has been some talk about Western's football program upgrading from Division I-AA to I-A, the most challenging level of college football.

"This is an important matter which warrants an open, objective campus dialogue," Ransdell said. "I will conduct several forums this fall devoted to this discussion."

The university's honors program is preparing for a major expansion in size and mission, he said. Honors Director Craig Cobane is examining ways to do this, so that the program will be "capable of attracting many of our state's and our nation's best students," Ransdell said.

Cobane is studying other programs and what lies in the future for honors students, Ransdell said.
"Like Wayne Gretzky skated to where the puck will be, I want Craig to anticipate where the best honors programs will be in 10 years and move us in that direction," Ransdell said.

It is important that research done at Western be used to serve the community, Ransdell said. This is done both through commercialization of some areas and in meeting needs that are not traditionally well-served in rural communities, he said.

Some of Western's science researchers are using their disciplines to sell services like power-plant emissions monitoring to companies in the region, rather than simply doing research in a lab. This is important as a revenue source, as a teaching tool for students and as a way for Western to contribute to regional development, Ransdell said.

"We are learning more and more how to take existing knowledge in our classrooms and laboratories and apply it to the identification and solving of the problems of those people and in those communities," he said.

Western also provides free services, mainly in health care, to the region through the newly opened Clinical Education Complex - a center for treatment of mental and physical disabilities in children - and through the school's rural mobile health units, which provide health and dental screenings around the area.

Both programs will be receiving additional funding to extend their reach, Ransdell said.

Western must think big to achieve its goals, Ransdell said, and become what is described in the university's slogan: "A leading American university with international reach."

"Martin Luther King did not proclaim that I have a plan," Ransdell said. "He said, 'I have a dream.' Our dreams are modest compared to his. They may not change the course of humankind, but they will change the course of a university."
Ransdell’s done great job with university

As executive director of Operation P.R.I.D.E., I am proud to live in a town with a beautiful campus like Western Kentucky University.

In the past years, WKU President Dr. Gary Ransdell and the Western Kentucky University Board of Regents have gone above and beyond the call of duty in the area of aesthetic improvements.

The signature brick walls defining Western, renovation of E.A. Diddle Arena, restorations of residence halls, addition of the Guthrie Bell Tower, improvements to Dero Downing Center and the landscaping on Avenue of Champions, formerly Big Red Way, highlights Western’s commitment to make Bowling Green and Warren County a better place to live. Dr. Ransdell’s plan to transform Western from a university of regional importance to a university of national prominence appears in the new face of Western Kentucky University.

All citizens should be delighted with the improvement not only to the campus, but the community as a whole.

Thank you Dr. Ransdell and the Western Kentucky University Board of Regents for your continued support of beautification efforts and facilities management. Operation P.R.I.D.E. commends you for making Western Kentucky University the best it can be.

Catherine Thomas
Bowling Green
Bank puts Ransdell, Sullivan on board

BB&T has named Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell and Curtis Sullivan to its local advisory board, the equivalent of a board of directors.

Ransdell also is a member of the Council on Postsecondary Education, board member for College Heights Foundation and Intermodal Transportation Authority and is an educational consultant.

The Louisville native is a former board member of Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce and Southern Regional Education Board and a former chairman of Warren County's United Way campaign.

Sullivan is president and chief executive officer of Omni Custom Meats and is chairman of ITA and a board member at The Medical Center. He is a past chairman of the chamber of commerce and former director of the Bowling Green Area Economic Development Authority and is a founding director and former chairman of the Southcentral Kentucky Minority Economic Development Authority.
'The spirit makes the master,' but the dollar makes it possible

Morning sun lit the top of The Hill. A chill wind blew past the plaque that announces the Western Kentucky University motto, "The spirit makes the master."

Inside the president's office, Gary Ransdell sat on his striped couch, giving me the evil eye.

Well, it really wasn't the evil eye, but it was obvious to me that he had something on his mind, and he was about to unload it. "You're always interested in talking to me about the emphasis on athletics," he said.

He's right. I think it's outrageous that schools hard-pressed to do right by academic programs would waste badly needed money on big-time intercollegiate sports teams — especially the unreasonably expensive ones, and obviously football.

But then, as he loves to point out, that's the stuff we cover.

He thinks more attention is due the other stuff — the 95 percent of campus activity to which newspapers do not devote page after page of detailed coverage; for which TV stations do not send news crews and satellite trucks. "We just sent our speech and debate team to Spain, where they won their fifth International Forensics Association championship," Ransdell said, "and it won't rate more than a paragraph." And sure enough, as far as I can tell, it didn't even get an inch in my paper.

Ransdell's right. The spirit makes the master, but the basketball team makes the news.

I understand the frustration. In 2003, Western's Forensic Society did something really extraordinary. It managed an unprecedented sweep of the major national and international titles in speech and debate. And as far as I can tell, we didn't share that with our readers.

Now to be fair to us, Ransdell didn't mention the 26-paragraph story, with accompanying photo, that Sara Shipley gave Courier-Journal readers back in 2001, when Western hosted a major national forensics tournament. That piece devoted some nice, fully-earned ink to WKU's high-flying speech and debate program, which had begun to win international competitions.

Ransdell told reporter Shipley, "Being the best in the world three years in a row — in my mind, it dwarfs any athletic endeavor."

The man is consistent. Yea, even persistent.

I guess that's how he raises all that new money, the better to develop WKU into something like Miami of Ohio — a much-better-than-average state institution.

The names and hometowns of the young folks who won international titles for WKU in Madrid tell you that (1) excellence can lure some of the best and brightest students from elsewhere to Bowling Green, and (2) some of the best and brightest are from right here in Kentucky.

"What a great start in our quest to repeat last year's sweep of first place finishes in all of the major debate tournaments," Ransdell said. "To have eight of our students claim international individual honors and the international team championship is fantastic. What a great day for Western."

Maybe he was revved up because I saw him the day Western's nationally ranked journalism program won the national Hearst collegiate photo competition for the 13th time in 15 years. (The other two years they came in second.)

I think what frustrates Ransdell is that Western is proving, year after year, it can make local young folks competitive with the top students nationally, and can bring exciting young talent to Kentucky from other states. But our own state government gives the institution mediocre support in return.

He's grateful for the state support he does get, and he adds lots of private dollars to it with hard-driving, hard-nosed development work (that's fund raising — going out and asking people to give). But he, and every other public university president I've talked with around Kentucky, is convinced that more state funding is needed.

The best evidence is the big tuition hikes to which they're forced to resort, just to balance their budgets. And then there are all the great ideas that don't get off the ground, for lack of money.

While state legislators hide behind those cowardly no-new-tax pledges, and gubernatorial candidates promise voters they won't ask for any new revenue, innovations like WKU's proposed Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Science go begging. Western needs $10.5 million to renovate Florence Schneider Hall, which would house the high school juniors and seniors participating in the program, and maybe $3 million annually to operate the center. So far all it has been given is $500,000 for planning purposes.

The idea is to create a place where special students would spend their junior and senior years of high school, in a specially designed and supervised WKU residence hall. Their classmates would be fellow academy students and WKU undergraduates. At the end of two years, they will have earned at least 60 college credit hours and a high school diploma. The model is Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science, which has been highly successful for more than a decade.

Western has been developing and sharing expertise in the education of gifted students for more than a quarter of a century, but this would represent a great leap forward. Apparently we can't afford it or a lot of other great ideas at campuses across the state.

We'd rather send people to Frankfort with a no-new-tax pledge in their pocket and no enthusiasm for financing greatness.

No wonder Ransdell sometimes has the evil eye.

Much remains to be done by WKU, leader

Money talks.
What it said - via the Western Kentucky University Board of Regents - was that President Gary Ransdell should finish his career at the school.
The board made it known that's what it wants by granting Ransdell an 11.7 percent increase - and that's just in his base salary. In a contract that takes effect Jan. 1, Ransdell will make more than $210,000, a raise of more than $20,000. In addition, the president receives supplemental retirement funds and other benefits, including a house and a full-size car.
Ransdell certainly has proven himself adept at what has to be the top priority of university presidents - fund raising. Since being hired in 1997 as his alma mater's president, Ransdell has led in a five-year capital campaign that reached its $78 million goal a year ahead of schedule. The school also is now on better financial footing for the future because of an 84 percent growth in the university's endowment. Annual deposits from gifts has grown from $3 million to more than $12 million annually. There is $136 million in capital construction in progress or planned for the coming school year to improve Western's physical infrastructure. Enrollment has exploded and external funding for faculty scholarship has grown significantly, as well.
Against that backdrop, a $20,000 raise this year looks much different. Still, it's a real good salary and appropriate recognition for someone who is not only able to focus on long-range planning but successfully implement his strategies, as well. It also is more in line with what the presidents of the state's other major universities make, including Lee Todd at the University of Kentucky, who makes $265,000 a year. John Shumaker, the former president at the University of Louisville who recently left to take the presidency of the University of Tennessee, made more than $263,000 a year.
However, now that Ransdell has successfully put in place the needed internal organization to raise the money from the outside, more attention needs to be given toward greater improvement of student retention and graduation rates. Also, now perhaps focus can be directed at somehow getting faculty members better raises, even in these difficult economic times. While these areas are not as glamorous, recruiting and retaining students and quality faculty members will be critical in the push to bring the university to national prominence.
With his demonstrated administrative and fund-raising abilities, Mr. Ransdell is the person to have at the reins to bring improved results in those areas and to develop the full potential that exists on The Hill.
Western University Kentucky's president is proud of both physical and mental changes

By SCOTT SISCO

Gary Ransdell's first day as Western Kentucky University's ninth president was Nov. 1, 1997. A lot has changed—both physically and mentally—on the campus since then.

Student Government Association President Jamie Sears, a senior from Mayfield, said she has seen the attitude at Western in every aspect of campus, change in her four years on the Hill.

"I feel like he's done a lot to make the Western spirit grow," she said.

Sears said apathy still exists in the student body, but it is much less than when she was a freshman.

Ransdell said he first heard about the opening for president in January 1997 when he and then-president Tom Meredith attended the same meeting. Meredith told Ransdell he would be telling the board of regents he would be leaving to take over the University of Alabama system.

"He thought I might be interested in knowing he would be leaving Western," Ransdell said.

Ransdell began to do some homework. The board was seeking a transformation for Western and someone to lead it.

"It began to come together," Ransdell said.

His first interview was with a search consultant in Atlanta in June 1997. Ransdell met with the board in Nashville in July, then came to campus when the search was down to the last three or four candidates in August.

The board made the offer and Ransdell accepted.

Lois Gray, the current chairwoman of the board of regents, was appointed when the search had been narrowed.

"I was privileged to be a part of the interview and selection process," she said.

The board was looking for a person with specific and measurable goals in mind.

"That drive we were looking for has come to reality with Dr. Ransdell," Gray said. "Things are moving forward in a very purposeful way."

Gray said she has noticed a change in the campus since Ransdell took over, especially in the physical campus.

"I think these are for the good," Gray said.

A few years ago, Gray said she was riding a bus around campus with several community members. They were talking about how great things on campus were looking.

"They were singing Gary's praises," she said.

The announcement was made Sept. 12 on campus.

"That was a pretty special moment," Ransdell said.

"My mentors, my role models were Western leaders historically."

Most of Ransdell's knowledge of administrative positions came at Southern Methodist University and Clemson, as on-the-job experience.

Ransdell said he looked up to former presidents like Dero Downing, Kelley Thompson, Don Zacharias and John Minton.

"Those are the people who were kind of shaping my career," Ransdell said.

Faculty regent Robert Dietle, who has been at Western

See RANSDELL, 8A
for 11 years, said the mood of the faculty has definitely improved since Meredith's tenure. There was tension, even ill will, between Meredith and the faculty, Dietle said.

Ransdell, takes suggestions from faculty committees seriously, Dietle said.

"He doesn't always agree with them, but he takes seriously the voice of the faculty," he said.

Ransdell chose his career path when he decided to go to Indiana University for his doctorate.

"When I made the decision to get a doctorate, I was also making a decision to pursue a career in higher education administration," Ransdell said. "Inherent in that decision was, to me, the obvious career pursuit to hopefully rise to this position, not necessarily here because you never know when the time and circumstance all comes together to be a president at your alma mater. It's a rarity for all the dynamics to come together to make that happen."

Ransdell started his professional career at Western in the office of admissions. He left Western to get more experience.

"I knew that it would be unlikely that I would become president if I stayed at Western," Ransdell said.

By leaving, he could control his own destiny, rather than waiting for others to leave.

Ransdell listed several accomplishments that he is most proud of in his first five years.

"The No. 1 thing that I'm most proud of is an elevation of attitude at Western," he said.

There is an attitude of aspiring toward national prominence instead of being satisfied with regional importance, Ransdell said.

The beginning of campus restoration was the second item on the list.

The campus was in bad shape five years ago," Ransdell said.

The Student Life Foundation, which was created to sell bonds so that the state wouldn't incur more debt to renovate the dorms on campus, was the prime element in the campus improvement program, Ransdell said.

"We created the model ourselves, we took the risk of implementing it and what a terrific pay-off that has been, the renovation of our residence halls," Ransdell said.

The success of Western's capital campaign is another source of pride.

"Major gift giving was not in our culture," Ransdell said. "People thought a major gift was a few thousand dollars. People now understand the importance of philanthropy. We have forever changed our culture in that regard."

No. 4 on Ransdell's list is the creation of engineering baccalaureate programs and a greater emphasis on applied sciences.

"That's a key driver for economic development and that's a responsibility we've embraced the last five years," he said.

The state has encouraged universities to increase enrollment and Western has done that in the past five years.

The applicant pool is much larger and retention and graduation rates are increasing.

"All those things are affecting our enrollment growth," Ransdell said.

Ransdell also takes great pride in things he isn't responsible for directly, like the School of Journalism and Broadcasting winning national contests, the Forensics Department winning national titles, the Engineering Department's concrete canoe placing fourth national, along with many other faculty and student successes.

"Those kinds of things are enjoyable, and we've achieved a lot in the last five years and they are great sources of pride, but they are attributed to the great faculty and students that we enjoy," Ransdell said. "A lot of people are responsible for all of these things. All I've done is try to be a catalyst. We've upgraded talent and brought people in who can help us achieve in these areas."

The university has also grown in sponsored research.

"I'm very proud of our faculty accepting the challenge to find extramural funding to support our scholarships," Ransdell said.

The distance learning program at Western is another source of pride.

"I'm proud of our emergence as the state's leader in distance learning both in the number of courses and the number of students," Ransdell said.

For the next five years, Western needs to complete construction projects going on now, complete the capital campaign and plan the next one, complete accreditation for the Engineering Department, and complete the universitywide reaccreditation process.

"You have to do that every so many years and the time is upon us," Ransdell said. "It's a huge undertaking for a university."

Sears said she hopes Ransdell keeps the progressive attitude.

"I really think he needs to keep up with what he's doing," she said.

Ten years down the road, Western will be a different university, Spears said.

"I love that," she said.

Ransdell said he thinks he could retire from Western.

"Now five years into the job, I'm beginning to feel like we can get it done here," he said. "We have a long way to go and we're just getting started."
WKU President Ransdoll appointed to SREB

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdoll has been appointed by Gov. Paul Patton to the Southern Regional Education Board.

Ransdoll will replace University of Kentucky President Charles T. Wellington Jr., whose term has expired. Ransdoll’s term continues through June 30, 2004.

The SREB assists state leaders by directing attention to key issues; collecting, compiling and analyzing comparable data; and conducting broad studies and initiating discussions that lead to recommendations for state and institutional long-range planning, actions and policy proposals.

SREB’s 16 member states are Kentucky, Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.
A time for change

On March 13, 14 people with a vested interest in higher education joined the Messenger-Inquirer editorial board to discuss Kentucky's future of post-secondary education. It is the 13th forum in the past four years the editorial board has sponsored. The following is an edited transcript.

Question: Do Kentucky colleges and universities need to do things differently than they have in the past or do they simply need to do what they've done before and do it better?

Gordon Davies: Kentucky's colleges and universities need to do things differently. What we have done in the past surely could be improved, but that is not an adequate way to anticipate the needs of Kentucky in these next several decades.

Q: What sort of different things do we need to do?

Davies: Kentucky's public universities do not have a history of working well together, and I think they need to begin doing that. The relationships between public and private universities are cordial, but cordiality is not the same as real cooperation.

I think the nature of American higher education is changing because of the differences in the populations we serve, the reality of lifelong learning as a phenomenon for all of our citizens and the introduction of instruction that is no longer bound by place and time.

Gary Randell: I think that we have to change dramatically. Many of our institutions over the last 15 to 25 years have become somewhat complacent. I think there is a dramatic change that needs to take place in determining what each campus needs to do to determine its strengths and priorities, to reallocate resources to those priorities and strengths and learn what is fundamentally critical to help its particular area of the state emerge.

We have to focus on our respective main campuses on quality, getting rid of a regional connotation and begin thinking much more nationally in terms of the quality and impact of our programs.

Billy Joe Miles: It's pretty obvious that with Gordon Davies' direction and with the cooperation of the regional universities that change is about to take place as we bring in a new president. When you compare Kentucky to Silicon Valley or the Carolinas, all really prosperous communities are involved with a research university.

The University of Kentucky has its first project with a company from IBM. The only thing we did was rent them land. We didn't tie any of the scholarships, library, computer or faculty to that. The only problem we have is time. We are about 15 years behind, and the other parts of the nation aren't going to stop and wait for us. We have a lot to do, and we need the help of the regional universities.

Wes Poling: I think for Kentucky Wesleyan there is a built-in feeling of wanting to hang on to some tradition. The strength of a small college and the ability to have small classes and the value-oriented kinds of things are part of our role and our roots. Yet, technology and cooperation are right on our doorsteps.

Wesleyan is trying to use a group to bring together the strength of our education and put it on the Internet and be able to share some of those resources.

I think the independent colleges in Kentucky have underutilized capacity. We need to embrace students to come in, and we have to find a way to make that a viable choice without getting in the way of the rest of higher education in Kentucky — not to eat away at enrollment somewhere else.

Sandra Appling: I think cooperation and collaboration are the keys to what we need to do. I've been working for over 10 years to try to get technical education recognized in the regional universities and other places — with some luck and with some luck.

Everybody doesn't need a degree as we all know, but what everybody does need is a better quality of life.

Sister Vivian Bowles: Brescia was founded with the mission to read the signs of the times and to adapt. I think we have continued to do that for our 50 years.

We're looking at a better form of cooperation. We no longer will introduce any programs that another institution, public or private, offers in the area. If we do offer something similar, it has to be very different in its delivery and in its orientation.

Q: The Council on Postsecondary Education recently issued a report showing that 47 percent of existing degree programs in public universities were not producing the desired number of graduates. How difficult is it to say, "I want to move my school forward, but I don't want to reduce the number of students I have coming in"?

Jacqueline Addington: Sometimes a local community only needs eight or 10 people a year in a particular area, and they couldn't employ more than that. Information technology is going to change the concept of cooperation as a major issue.

Reducing the numbers of students graduating from specific programs is not a major issue. I think the Internet is going to solve that problem for us because it is going to be accessible. We're offering nine courses this semester online. We have students from all over the state taking courses with us.

Randell: There has to be some duplication on our campuses if we're to offer a broad liberal education, if we're to offer quality and have students who graduate in a science discipline who can communicate effectively, who can reason and who can be successful in decision-making in a very competitive environment.

I suspect that about half of the programs that we have that may not have the numbers suggested are necessary. About half we will eliminate or change. Some (universities) may resist making any change. We're certainly not going to do that because we will find that in the efficiencies that some of those changes will bring about.
Hugh Hayden: This issue goes to the heart of the matter. Kentucky has small political fields, its economic base is limited, and it is a state that has limited resources.

When it comes down to efficiency and allocating money to our universities, we don't have and probably never will have enough resources in this state to feed all those professors who are working at the universities. I'm not saying that the political structure built around the Department of Education is a reason to keep a program going.

This is like a garden. If you don't weed the garden, you get this accumulation of things after a while that are not necessarily healthy and productive. Ask faculty to review and you come up with a thoughtful curriculum, and that's all we're trying to do. Does that save money? No, it reallocates money.

The base of this system is $1.5 billion and most of the money in the future is already in this system. If we don't begin talking about how to reallocate this base, we're not going to get there.

Sister Vivian: the notion that we're not going to start a program unless we do it entirely differently or unless it's something that we're not interested in is a reprehensible notion. I think that applies to the public as well as to the private.

Q: Murray State made a request for an engineering program. How do you deal with those proposals in light of deciding not to duplicate?

Davies: At Western and his colleagues have gone about in a very professional way a set of arguments for engineering programs at Western. We're just not convinced it's the right answer.

Northern Kentucky (University) clearly needs engineering programs as its Northern Kentucky evolves. If we can find a way to deliver engineers and engineering education without engineering programs, I would like to do it.

Ransdell: We have over 500 students who are high school graduates in Kentucky who are enrolled in engineering programs in the states that touch us -- Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana. We are losing talent to other states.

Industries in Bowling Green and industries in Owensboro are hiring graduates from other states, not from the two engineering programs in Kentucky. We have 10 graduates a year out of that program. The reason is, as soon as they get the very basics, they are hired by industry. We have people in that program who have not graduated who are working at AK Steel for $60,000 a year. That program could be eliminated because we have trouble getting students to be able to finish.

Davies: We are not stupid people. We know that people are hired out of associate degrees as soon as they have the skills that they need. We know that degrees confered is not an adequate measure of a community college program.

The process we have started is only for the universities, not the community colleges. All we did was identify the ones who didn't fit through one screen. Gary Randsell's 90-30 is probably right because the next thing that we look at is how many students are enrolled in the program. After that, is there any compelling regional interest to keep the program going? Suppose the chair of the Department of Physics says, "We don't turn out a graduate every other year, but we generate $400,000 a year in (National Science Foundation) funding." That's pretty impressive.
demographic trends in the work force, but students are going to have to be more prepared in those soft skills.

We are looking very strongly in our school system and in Owensboro's school system at middle college-type programs and opportunities for our students at grades 11 and 12.

I think even the concept of higher education has to change. You use to say that higher education was "higher than this" and it was only for a select few. But I think now we need to begin to think about how more and more students can have that opportunity to move into at least two years of postsecondary.

Davenport: The Citizen's Committee on Education was formed around 1985 to address the problem of going to college, and, of course, the community college came out of that effort. Then at our last meeting, 17 years later, we were looking at issues we need to pursue, and we worked our way back to our real problem — on- and off-campus.

It really won't matter how much these colleges and universities change their curriculum or market or track students if there's not that body of students out there who are inclined or motivated to pursue their education. I think community groups are going to have to become very active in working to develop the student body from K-16 to just create this climate of learning.

Q: How well prepared for college are the students that are coming out of public high school and private high schools in Kentucky?

Helen Mountain: I think what we see is a real variance. We know that there are a lot of our kids who are getting to a four-year university who are doing remedial work. We've got to do a better job of finding out whether four-year institutions are the appropriate place for that student.

What we've done is convince kids that the only path to success is that four-year baccalaureate degree. Sometimes we've encouraged some students to pursue that route who might have been much happier and certainly much more successful choosing another route or even waiting a couple of years before they pursued higher education.

There are a couple of things that we're doing that gets back to this seamless kind of process. Over the last couple of years, Northern Kentucky University has piloted a program where they offer an assessment in mathematics to all the students in their area who are thinking about going to college. "Let's find out if you have taken the kinds of courses that will enable you to be successful when you get to college, and if not, you still got a year or more to take that course work." There's been a disconnect between what some high schools think colleges expected in the way of performance and what some colleges and universities actually expected.

I think one of the things that is very promising is the P-16 Council. It's been in place for just over a year which has representatives from the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Kentucky Board of Education to talk about the kinds of issues we rub against each other. One of the things that has come out of that is this desire to offer at least this mathematics assessment to all students and let them make their plans.

Brazen in trying to put this cooperative effort together, we're running into some bureaucratic roadblocks that really indicate that even the folks in Frankfort don't necessarily talk to each other the way they should.

For example, we are driven by (average daily attendance) money, and we would like to send some of our students to the community college for course work in a middle college-type environment.

One of the roadblocks for all students having post-secondary opportunities is finances. I think the KEES (Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship Program) will be a big help. But in trying to get kids into an associate degree path, we're going to try to graduate them from traditional high schools with credit hours to where they can apply and have the incentive. With the job market the way it is, some of these kids will try to take their crack at making pretty good money right out of high school. But if we can graduate them with some credit hours that can be an incentive to continue, and finish using KEES money to complete the cycle, they'll have 14 years of essentially public education.

In trying to provide those opportunities, we are running into little bureaucratic entanglements that make that difficult. One of those is the whole ADA funding mechanism.

Addington: I think the variance issue is probably one of the more important discussions that we can have. One of our major functions is to serve the other end of that variance. There is no question that by far the largest percentage of our students are those who are less well prepared.

We have 98 percent of our students testing into remediation in mathematics. That's pretty phenomenal to remember who it is that we are serving. But when everything that we read today says that 80 percent of the jobs out there are going to require some post-secondary education, we don't have any choice but to educate that group of disadvantaged students.

Miller: Why do you think we have this wide variation here? The main thing is that we really haven't sold the need for education.

When you look at the job market here and you look at the people who are applying, there is no telling the number of people without any qualifications who are looking for a job.
Technology is really changing. We look at Owensboro, and we look at our area and I see Owensboro really becoming almost a Henderson in the next 10 years. U of L is tremendous in what they are doing for that community. We see that with Gary in Bowling Green, and you can drive down the street and feel the pulse that’s generated from that.

Here in Owensboro, if we had a triangle and we wanted to create prosperity in the center, we would have to do it through convincing the population of Owensboro that there is a need for higher education. Then we have to have affordable education.

If Hugh can create industry to come in that pays higher, we have affordable education and the tech school creates prosperity and we have the self-esteem, then Brescia and Wesleyan are going to have the cream of the students.

But I see this community doesn’t have an affordable education system. We end up with fewer high school students in college although we have the best high schools in the state. A lot of them don’t want to go to college because they don’t want to leave this community, and their parents don’t want them to leave this community.

Q: If education is determined to be the strategy for economic development in our community, what are the two or three goals that we set that can be measured short- and long-term?

It’s pretty obvious that when we look at the rate of kids that are going from high school on to college, we’re way behind the other communities in the state. That’s what I talk about looking out five and 10 years. If we don’t do that, how is going to bring industry? How are we going to be prosperous as a community?

There’s no doubt, Bowling Green is eating our lunch in this community in every measure you have of prosperity, and I think of self-esteem.

Bowles: Billy Joe, I have a problem with what you said. Actually 98 percent of our students receive very generous financial aid packages both from federal, state and especially from Brescia money. We did a survey just about three weeks ago, and the average Brescia student receives $9,700 a year in free money. Our tuition is not but $6,900, so they receive not only tuition but room and board. We have very few students that say that they do not come here because of finances. It’s more they do not attend college because “My parents don’t see the reason for it, why do I want to go to college or why do I even want to go to the tech school when I can go to AK Steel or Toyota or somewhere else and make more than your professors who have a doctors?”

Poling: I think I hear what you’re saying about our community. I think that neither Brescia nor Kentucky Wesleyan is in a position to offer agricultural education. We likely aren’t going to do that, and yet that’s something that is terribly important to this part of the state. It is that area in which our community is undereducated, and we don’t have affordable educational opportunities.

Q: If we have students who don’t go to college so they can go right into the work force and make lots of money, what’s our issue?

Poling: The question really raises a philosophical issue. Billy Joe was talking about prosperity is presumably the end goal. Prosperity comes because of education and the people are trained because they need good jobs and they go on. Why do we need higher education if so many get hired by AK Steel after some level and are earning $60,000 a year and Billy Joe’s prosperity follows? The issue for me is whether education is totally utilitarian in its value.

Miles: Probably.

Miles: If you don’t do a better job of having kids read coming out of fourth grade and you don’t have enough people taking algebra in the eighth and ninth, you’re not going to have the people you want graduating from high school and then going on to college.

A: Indiana has been very effective in increasing the college going rate to at least a 4-year level. In 13 years, Indiana has gone from No. 46 in the nation in college going rate to about 23rd in the nation. That all comes back to collaboration between the Department of Education and post-secondary education, starting at a very early age with parents and helping them to understand the value and importance of education.

Miles: The one thing that I think keeps us from having that is pretty obvious. Our legislature doesn’t understand the need for education.

Q: How do we change that?

Miles: Probably at the polls.

Davenport: Yeah, you say we don’t have affordable education. Are you talking about across this state or just here?

Miles: (more is needed) to create the prosperity that you need with the four-year degree and maybe on to a master’s degree so that you can solicit companies to Owensboro. Hugh can’t bring a company to this community that doesn’t have a job force. They’re not going to locate here and then go to other states to try to bring those employees in. They’re going to go where the employees are.

I think that in this community we have tried to protect Brescia and Wesleyan, rightly so, but long-term it’s hurt us. When you bring prosperity to a community and you look at the basic people in the community that have lived here all of their life, if they could afford it, they would send their kids to Brescia or Wesleyan.
The value of it is, you are training someone to have a set of skills that they are going to take and use. Or is education creating a broad base and whose lifetime will be reflective of a whole lot of other issues. They've studied cultures and learned different languages and been able to understand what is happening in a different kind of culture because people have been exposed to different philosophical positions, which has nothing to do with whether they can turn on a computer or work with electrical lines. If education is going to be only utilitarian, we are missing a whole lot of what is important.

Davies: I don't disagree with you, maybe I think it is a deadly trap to fall into the training vs. education or utilitarian vs. nonutilitarian models of thinking. The profession of our children in the 21st century will be learning. To talk about the arts, the humanities or the liberal arts as if they equip you to do something different than be useful to society, I think, is a fundamental error. The seven historic liberal arts were a highly utilitarian curriculum. It just happens that they are irrelevant today.

We want to create good jobs, not just chicken processing plants, and yet you can't create good jobs without a good work force. The two have to go together, and to some extent there will always be imbalances where you're creating a work force and it's tromping out of the state while you're trying to create the jobs that will keep them in. We have to create a different kind of expectation within the entire population.

Kentucky is a whole part of our population for whom higher and advanced education beyond high school is not even an option they consider, we're not going to make it in Kentucky. We have to break down the bureaucratic barriers that exist that prevent someone who could do well in a community college or university course, but he happens to be junior in high school. We have to essentially throw this whole system up in the air and start again with the question of what the rules are. I feel very strongly that if you don't prepare people for a lifetime of learning, you're not preparing them for work.

Mounjoy: Traditionally we have said, "If we only had this program and if we were only training people to do this, then we could get ABC company." Then five years down, it's, "We don't need anymore of those, we need to jump over here and we need those now." I think we have made a mistake in letting people assume that accumulating one set of skills will enable them to be successful forever.

I think what Wes is saying in part is that what we have to do is train people basic skills that prepare them to learn. Responsibility is to give people the basis that they need in order to keep changing.

They say that at IBM you're going to change many of your skills at least once every seven years. When I graduated from college, it was assumed that I learned what I needed to do in order to get into a job and probably stay there until I retired. It's a completely different situation that our students face now.

Jiminy Glenn: I think a lot of students are now realizing that you're going to change careers something like six times during the course of your lifetime. The idea of starting out with one company and working for that company 30 or 40 years no longer exists. You have to have the broad basis of education. While a lot of students talk and complain about the general education classes, they realize that they're there for a reason.

Randell: You have to come back with what's lacking in this community — a public education that provides some combination of technical and utilitarian importance to produce baccalaureate potential leaders that can serve this community and help you recruit and serve the industry that you need. On an Owensboro perspective, I have to keep coming back to engineering as being a fundamentally critical missing element in this community.

Maybe instead of collaboration with UK here, Western and Evansville need to get together to serve this community.

Davies: Let's throw out some of the rules. Why don't we in Kentucky contract with Brescia and Wesleyan to provide access to public higher education in Kentucky, rather than extending the commitment in bricks and mortar of more public university presence in Owensboro?

N looming engineers is fundamentally different from needing engineering programs. Why don't we supplement the salaries of engineers hired in Kentucky by $10,000 a person and go elsewhere to bring them in? You don't have to create engineering programs to hire engineers. You can buy them.

Why don't we remove out-of-state tuition? A venture capitalist told the governor of Maryland that instead of charging out-of-state, they ought to be letting people to come into Maryland to major in the sciences and engineering provided they'll stay in Maryland. Why don't we do that?

Why don't we take advantage of the electronic technologies which are now offering engineering curricula and begin offering those curricula in Kentucky again without regard for institutions.

I am very intrigued about going across the river. Working with Evansville may be exactly what you should be doing.

Glenn: I think Kentucky has a very good pre-secondary education system. Like Chairman Miles said here, one of the big things is making sure that the regional institutions and the universities get the Research Challenge Trust Fund again — the right to match grants. (Students) realize how big of a difference that is going to make in moving UK to a top 20 public research institution. It'll make our degrees worth that much more once we get out of school. That's primarily what we're concerned about, that once we get out, we show employers that we come from the University of Kentucky, and we will be able to demand a higher wage because the University of Kentucky stamp is worth that much more.

Q: Are Kentucky's best and brightest students attracted to the system of higher education in Kentucky or are they going elsewhere?

Brakes: There seems to be this perception that they need to go out of state. Many of our best and brightest students also had the inclination to go to private institutions.
McGaughy: We would reflect similar statistics. If I look at my National Merit finalists, they are definitely attracted to our state institutions and private institutions. If they stay in state, there seems to be more appeal for private institutions.

Mountjoy: When our youngest son was a senior in high school, he had done very well. He received a lot of material from a lot of colleges who were anxious for him to come there. I don't recall his getting a single piece of recruitment material from one of the public colleges and universities in Kentucky. If we want to talk about making these kids know what their options are, they have to know that there are programs available to them in state that will meet their particular needs.

Ramsdell: That precisely is what we are trying to create at Western with the Kentucky Academy for Math and Science. It is a program to allow gifted students to achieve their full potential while they are juniors and seniors in high school.

Miles: At UK we've raised the entrance level, and that has pretty well locked in our enrollment, so that the growth will come in the regional schools and that we will be able to do exactly what Jimmy said. As we raised those levels, I was amazed at the level of the student that wanted to come to UK.

I think the schools are doing their part, but I come back and look in the mirror and we're not doing our part. If a majority of kids are going free, why, as a community, are we not raising more money and why can't we double the enrollment at Brescia?

Hood: I hear a lot of discussion about the high school graduate, and I just hope we don't lose sight of the working adult. Many of my staff members are full time working in Western's MBA program or the masters in nursing. I hope that we help them balance and that we make it accessible and that we make it affordable to them so that they can continue their lifelong learning.

Applying: We certainly want to focus on the high school students and get them into our institutions, but we also always have to focus on the nontraditional working adult. I think our technical colleges can be a feeder program for the regional universities and private colleges.

Davies: I urge that we remember that feeder concept is likely not valid anymore. Northern Virginia Community College enrolls more baccalaureate degree holders than they transfer to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

If you're 16 and you sit at home and register in an online course at Western, is anybody going to stop you from doing that? No, we don't want to. And yet Western says that in order to go to Western, you should be a high school graduate. But that just doesn't work for that student.

She can learn something if she takes this course, and this barrier that we have set up, which seems very reasonable in a very traditional sense, is no longer necessarily the right kind of barrier.
late-summer trip to China was much more than a chance for Dr. Gary Ransdell to sample the country’s Cantonese cuisine. The ninth president of Western Kentucky University (WKU) checked some serious goals off his never-ending “to-do” list on the university’s behalf. With two colleagues, Ransdell visited seven cities in 10 days. Before he got back to Bowling Green, he had furthered a research agreement with the Chinese coal ministry, strengthened existing exchange agreements with three universities, and signed a new sister agreement with one of China’s leading technology-oriented universities.

Now back on his home continent, Ransdell is quick to point out the differences in collegiate culture.

“Student life in China is dramatically different,” notes Ransdell. At a typical Chinese university, he says, only the top 7 percent of applicants are admitted. “Therefore, collegiate life there is much more serious. Only the best of the best are able to pursue a college degree. They have...”

Dr. Gary Ransdell
WKU President

The strategic plan, which was implemented in spring of 1998, has five focus areas: increasing student learning, developing the student body, ensuring high quality faculty and staff, enhancing responsiveness to constituents, and improving institutional effectiveness.

Ransdell is pleased by the results so far, and gladly reports on success stories.

“I would point to a dramatic increase in faculty research that is not only improving our curriculum, but the degree to which our faculty are improving the quality of life in our area of the state,” he says.

The numbers are a telling part of those success stories, too. According to Ransdell, sponsored research has mushroomed from $13 million to $19 million since the plan was implemented. With that federal funding, the university has addressed regional water quality and improved teacher effectiveness, among other things.

“Another example would be the growth in our endowment,” he says. “The endowment has surpassed $32 million, and the strategic plan has a goal to reach $50 million by 2003. We’re well on track to handsomely surpass that figure.”

Dr. Gary Ransdell
WKU President

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WKU president, Dr. Gary Ransdell, has developed a strategic plan for his alma mater to reach its fullest potential.

China Report

WKU president believes students half a world apart can learn from each other

very high graduation rates — and a very limited understanding of social things normally found on American campuses.”

He adds: “Having an automobile would be unheard of. They don’t have student centers and fraternities and sororities, and many of the campus activities we do.”

Ransdell believes WKU students and students at Chinese universities could learn from each other, which is one of the reasons he made a pitch for Chinese undergraduate students to pursue graduate studies at WKU.

Meanwhile, collegiate life in Kentucky continues much according to Ransdell’s plan.

“I’m encouraged by an attitudinal shift that Western can be nationally competitive in our academic and administrative programs, and the confidence that is being expressed that we have a strategic plan in place that provides a road map for our emergence as a nationally competitive institution,” he says.

“The endowment has surpassed $32 million, and the strategic plan has a goal to reach $50 million by 2003. We’re well on track to handsomely surpass that figure.”

—Dina Rogers
The good news of a report charting progress at Western Kentucky University and the announcement that private support is up substantially are more indications of the institution's educational strength.

A report charting the university on 58 performance indicators showed Western was making progress on most items, with exceptional marks earned for such things as high alumni and employer satisfaction, endowed scholarships and increased minority and international students.

The report found that Western had made exceptional progress on 10 indicators, substantial progress on 21, some progress on 18 and little or no progress on nine. No one institution hits 100 percent, but making progress on 49 of 58 items isn't bad.

Western President Gary Ransdell called it a candid report. Although generated by the university, there is little reason for exaggeration in this type of study.

Administrators and other officials study such reports to find strengths and weaknesses, so there is no reason to fudge the figures.

Coming on the heels of the report is an announcement that total private support for Western is up 68 percent from this time last year, with a six-month total of $4.4 million.

Private giving has increased substantially since Ransdell became Western's president.

Despite tuitions, student fees and state aid, universities still need donations from alumni and private benefactors. An increase in giving – besides providing needed cash – indicates the confidence and pride alumni and private citizens have in the university. It is a vote of confidence.

You don't give anybody or any entity money unless you have confidence in them. (The government, of course, is an exception. But, in that case, the giving is not totally voluntary.)

Last week, Western also announced that it would create bachelor of science degrees in construction engineering and management, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering.

This can only improve an already strong university.
Relationship With China Is Strengthened By WKU Visit

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell said he is pleased to have been part of the WKU delegation that visited the People's Republic of China in September.

As part of Western's exchange program with China, Dr. Ransdell and his wife Julie, Ogden College Dean Martin Houston and his wife Sue, and chemistry professor Wei Ping Pan visited three universities.

The group went with three objectives: "To ensure an ongoing research relationship with the Chinese Coal Ministry, to consummate a sister university agreement with Southeast University and to determine the potential for future partnership endeavors," Ransdell said. "Our goals were met and exceeded."

"Once I saw the significance of the trip, I was pleased to pursue it," Ransdell said. "Our interaction with China and Chinese universities goes beyond just our sciences, and I was not aware of that before."

Since 1989, 35 Chinese scholars have visited Western. They remained for an average of two years and produced more than 100 papers, in addition to co-authoring articles with WKU faculty and graduate students. In addition, 23 professors from Ogden College have visited Chinese universities. More than 50 of these short visits have taken place.

Dr. Pan, who is also coordinator of Far East Exchange Programs for Ogden College, estimates 50 percent of the information exchange relates to coal research, but say other WKU programs are also highlighted. These include nursing, geology, water treatment, biology and English. A possible partnership between Chinese universities and the Gordon Ford College of Business is being evaluated.

In 1988, a delegation from the Chinese Coal Ministry came to Western to learn about the coal chemistry research being conducted here. Subsequently, Pan and others went to China to establish the exchange program. The following year, seven Chinese university presidents came to Western to sign exchange agreements.

"I learned about the importance of coal in China, which I had no way to know before, and why our research relationship with the Chinese Coal Ministry is so important to them and to us," Ransdell said. "It's important to us because they can lend technological innovation to what we are trying to do, and it's important to them because our faculty and our labs help solve real problems for them."

Ransdell explained that because coal is China's primary energy source, pollution is a major problem, especially in Beijing. He said the information and technology China gains from Western's coal research can be used to solve emission problems.

Ransdell said having the opportunity to spend time with Houston gave him a great deal of informa-
...About research being conducted here at WKU.

"I learned a lot about what we were doing on this campus during this trip," he said. "As I learned more about the significance of what we were doing in the chemistry department with our thermal analysis lab, and what we're doing with other areas of the sciences, I began to realize the significance of the relationships that were in existence and that we were furthering."

The delegation visited China Mining University, Southeast University, Taiyuan University of Technology and met with the president of Xuanian Institute of Technology. At Southeast University, China's equivalent of MIT, a sister university agreement was signed which will ensure faculty, student and research exchanges. A delegation from Southeast University will visit Western in the spring.

The visit to the Taiyuan University of Technology was an especially personal one. Taiyuan President Xie has two children, a son and a daughter, who received master's degrees in chemistry from Western. His son, Wei Xie, manages WKU's thermal analysis laboratory. Both Xie's children also received master's degrees in chemistry from Western.

"This was a significant moment for President Xie to welcome and embrace Western and its president on his campus in front of his faculty and his students, given the gratitude that he feels toward Western for providing an education to his son and daughter and their spouses," Ransdell said. "I am now very indebted to President Xie for his hospitality, and for opening the doors that we were able to pass through during our trip."

Ransdell gave the welcoming remarks to a group of 4,000 freshmen at Taiyuan University. He said the experience was unique and fascinating. All the students were dressed in military attire because during the first six weeks as freshmen, students undergo military training.

"His speech inspired all the students," Pan said. "He was stopped nine or 10 times by applause during his five-minute speech."

Ransdell and Houston received honorary professorships from the Taiyuan University, and their wives spoke to student audiences about life in America.

While in China, the group visited cultural and historical landmarks. They saw the Great Wall of China; visited Tienmen Square; toured Xian, considered one of the three oldest cities in the world; and viewed the Terracotta Soldiers, an army of 5,000 statues constructed to protect the Emperor's tomb from attack.

"I want our students to know that there are other cultures, other religions, other races and other beliefs that we not only must be tolerant of, but must appreciate," Dr. Ransdell said. "I want other lands and other people to be familiar, not foreign, to our students. The only way we can do that is to bring people from other countries, other cultures, to our campus on some regular basis."
Group unites to promote economic development

By ROBYN L. MINOR
The Daily News

Economic development is the unifying theme of a group that wants to promote Bowling Green and Warren County to the state General Assembly.

Education, government, business and industry, economic development, the arts and beautification were represented in the group that met Monday at Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce and plans to have a public advocate in Frankfort when the Legislature begins its next session in January.

"This is a dynamic community with a lot of needs," said Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell, who attended the meeting.

"We need to be coordinated and thoughtful in our communication of those needs."

Ransdell is helping in that coordination by lending the use of Western's legislative liaisons Fred Hensley and Paul Cook. Cook, a former Western vice president will be the group's public advocate.

Communities that have a unified front in Frankfort seem to be more effective in garnering state money and support, House Speaker Jody Richards said.

"That unified front typically means there is more planning, forethought and consideration given to the needs of the community" before Frankfort is approached, Richards said.

Because the committee is in its infancy, group members still are voicing their wants for a particular group. State Sen. Brett Guthrie said the discussions have been a good start, but he hopes the needs can be prioritized.

Ransdell has a card printed up and ready to hand out featuring Western's legislative priorities - many of which have been well publicized, including the desire for an academy of math and science, renovation of Thompson Complex and other building projects.

Some areas overlap.

For instance, increasing Western's and Kentucky Advanced Technology Institute's presence and influence in Warren County were goals of Judge-Executive Mike Buchanon, Intermodal Transportation Authority President Dan Cherry and chamber member Curtis Sullivan.

There also has been some preliminary discussions about expanding Warren County's arts offerings, either through improvements at the existing Capitol Arts Center or through construction of a new facility. That project is on both Buchanon's list and that of Capitol Arts Alliance Executive Director John Rogers.

The arts board is trying to determine which route would be best for the community, Rogers said.

Many at the meeting also see support of the proposed Kentucky Tri-Modal Transpark as a way to boost economic development in the region.

In a legislative session with a tight budget, it's even more important to have a unified front, Guthrie said.
WKU President Ransdell

by Kimberly Shain Parsley
WKU Public Affairs

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. -- Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell said that he is pleased to have been a part of the WKU delegation that visited the People's Republic of China in September. As part of Western's exchange program with China, Dr. Ransdell and his wife, Julie, Ogden College Dean Martin Houston and his wife, Sue, and chemistry professor Wei Ping Pan visited three universities.

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furthers exchange with China

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引领一个代表团，昨天离开了中国。

他由马丁·休斯顿，奥格登学院科学、技术与健康学院院长，化学教授韦·平·潘，兰斯德尔的夫人朱莉，和休斯顿的夫人玛丽·苏。

这此访问意在增强现有的与中国的交换项目。

自该计划启动以来，西方已经接待了36位中国访问学者和40位中国大学的行政人员和学术人员短期访问。反过来，西方也派遣了奥格登学院的教员23次。

**BOWLING GREEN**

**WKU delegation leaves for China**

西部肯塔基大学校长加里·兰斯德尔率领的代表团于昨天离开，前往中国。

他由马丁·休斯顿，奥格登学院科学、技术与健康学院院长，化学教授韦·平·潘，兰斯德尔的夫人朱莉，和休斯顿的夫人玛丽·苏。

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**Daily Times**

9/3/99

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**BOWLING GREEN**

**Ransdell off to China**

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (AP) — Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell headed a delegation that left Thursday for a 10-day trip to China.

He was accompanied by Dr. Martin Houston, dean of the Ogden College of Science, Technology and Health; Chemistry Professor Wei-Ping Pan; Ransdell's wife, Julie; and Houston's wife, Mary Sue.

The visit is intended to enhance the existing WKU-Chinese exchange program with China Mining University in Beijing, Taiyuan University of Technology in Taiyuan City and Southeast University in Nanjing City.
Western’s president will speak at Chinese school

More students could make the trip in the future

By JASON RILEY

With a speech to 4,000 incoming freshman at Taiyuan University of Technology in Taiyuan City, China, just days away, Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell is trying to brush up on as much Chinese culture as possible.

Fortunately, there will be plenty of time as Ransdell, his wife, Julie, and the rest of the Western convoy traveling to the People’s Republic of China today.

“A 22-hour plane trip gives you a lot of time to prepare,” Ransdell said. “I have several books I am going to absorb on the trip over. This (speech) will be a new experience, that is for sure, but it will be great fun and something I look forward to doing.”

The 10-day trip is designed to enhance the existing exchange program Western has with China Mining University in Beijing, Taiyuan, and Southeast University in Nanjing City.

The program was established in 1989 between Western’s Ogden College of Science, Technology and Health and the Coal Ministry of China, said Martin Houston, dean of the science college. Houston and his wife, Mary Sue, will be making their third trip to China.

Since the program’s inception, Western has hosted 36 Chinese visiting scholars for an average period of one year and 40 Chinese university administrators and faculty for short visits. During the past decade, these visiting scholars have co-authored with Western faculty and students more than 100 papers in professional proceedings and journals, Houston said.

“We get some of their finest scientists to come here and do research with our faculty, and our faculty goes there and does so with them,” he said. “When they come over here, our students get to work with these scholars and our faculty get a different viewpoint.”

“They approach a problem one way, we approach it another. And by looking at both sides of the equation, we can redirect our efforts to be more effective in technology.”

Western, which has sent Ogden College faculty to China 23 times, also has received “a significant number of Chinese students in this exchange program,” Ransdell said.

“We have not been sending many of our students over there, but I hope with this trip to further advance our relationship and pave the way for more Western students to visit their campuses and further strengthen our research agreement,” he said.

Both Ransdell – the first Western president to make the trip – and Houston will receive honorary professorships at Taiyuan University. Houston will deliver lectures on the cultural exchange program to undergraduate and graduate students at Taiyuan and Southeast Universities and Julie Ransdell and Mary Sue Houston will teach at a few of the local elementary schools.

Wei-Ping Pan, a chemistry professor, also will be on the trip and will help translate.

The Chinese universities will cover the cost of everything but the plane tickets, Ransdell said.

The group also plans to take in some of the local sites, including the Great Wall, he said. They will return Sept. 14.
The nature of the president's job demands the higher pay, Ingram said. "These are extremely difficult jobs that are constantly under scrutiny from the public and state government."

"It's not fair to compare these jobs to a governor or the faculty," Ingram said.

"It's a completely different world."

Published Monday, May 31, 1999, in the Herald-Leader

Who earns what

Base salaries of the presidents of Kentucky universities and governing boards, according to the universities and the Council on Postsecondary Education.

- Kern Alexander, Murray State University -- $132,769
- George W. Reid, Kentucky State University -- $134,000
- Ronald G. Eaglin, Morehead State University -- $150,000
- Gary A. Ransdell, Western Kentucky University -- $152,976
- Robert W. Kustra, Eastern Kentucky University -- $165,000
- James C. Votruba, Northern Kentucky University -- $169,600
- Michael B. McCall, Kentucky Community and Technical College System -- $180,000
- John W. Shumaker, University of Louisville -- $200,000
- Charles T. Wethington, University of Kentucky -- $229,439
- Gordon Davies, Council on Postsecondary Education -- $260,000
Western club takes to the sky this weekend
Western Kentucky University Skydiving Club will kick off its campaign for new members Saturday and Sunday at Russellville-Logan County Airport.
Western President Gary Ransdell will skydive about 11:30 a.m. Sunday.
Tandem skydives will cost $125.

No jumping today: Chip St. Charles, a freshman from Mount Juliet, Tenn., and President Gary Ransdell wait to parachute Sunday afternoon. The president was unable to jump because the clouds were too low. Ransdell and St. Charles are members of Western’s Skydiving Club.
College presidents' role shifts to fund-raiser

Securing money, not running school, becoming top job

By CHRIS POYNTER
The Courier-Journal

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - When Western Kentucky University was searching for a president in 1997, the board of regents wanted a leader who could increase the school's prominence by raising millions of dollars for scholarships and endowed chairs.

The hiring of Gary Ransdell was right on the money.

In just 15 months, Ransdell has brought in more than $20 million, including a $10.1 million donation last month from retired Louisville businessman Gordon Ford.

Ransdell's reputation as a money magnet reflects a trend in higher education. The role of president is being rewritten in Kentucky as universities see their shares of state and federal dollars decline.

"The notion of the president as a distinguished scholar who just happens to be the president is quaint, but it's far out of date," said Gordon Davies, who in July became the first president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, which oversees the state's eight public universities. "Presidents are managers, they are fund-raisers, they are political proponents."

Kentucky's General Assembly recognized the importance of private contributions in 1997 when legislators set aside $110 million in inventive grants. The money will match, dollar-for-dollar, donations to the state schools.

Presidents across the nation have taken leading roles in fund raising, spending much of their time courting donors, speaking to civic and community groups and traveling from one alumni event to the next.

Some critics say presidents spend too many days courting donors and not enough time on campus.

However, aggressive fund raising "is not entirely negative. It doesn't mean that presidents can't be effective leaders. But I think it does have some inevitable negative conse-

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Role of college presidents changing

Continued from Page One

ences — first of all, just in the amount of time spent fund raising,” said David Greenberg, a fellow of American history at Columbia University in New York, who has written about the changing role of presidents for The New Republic magazine.

“Time spent fund raising is time not spent doing other things. It is a real question of what's being neglected,” Greenberg said that, in many cases, the day-to-day operations of the university, including academics, are turned over to a provost.

Atten Vos, a philosophy and religion professor at Western, said Ransdell's attention to fund raising is a positive thing that has not distracted him from leading the university. Vos, president of the Faculty Senate, said Ransdell has effectively delegated some of his duties to the provost and other administrators. Allowing Ransdell to remain involved in forming campus policy while not being bogged down with day-to-day duties.

"No president can afford to neglect the university," Vos said. "I think we all find it true that what you need is to delegate responsibility and make certain you have effective people in that position."

The job has changed significantly since Deron Downing served as Western's president from 1989 to 1997. He said he spent little time raising money. "I didn't place a great deal of importance upon it," said Downing, who still lives in Bowling Green and is president of Western's College Heights Foundation, which supports student scholarships.

"There were times when people would inform me that the College Heights Foundation was included in bequests in wills. ... We were always grateful when some person would share their resources."

Downing said that the president's role began changing in the 1980s, as universities began looking for other sources of income. The percentage of the state budget allocated for higher education in Kentucky has slipped from 20 percent in the early 1970s to 14 percent last year, according to the Council on Postsecondary Education. This year, it's 15 percent.

Davies said the declines forced universities to go calling "in a much more intense way" on alumni, foundations and corporations.

The University of Louisville is wrapping up a $200 million fund-raising campaign — money that will go to the endowment, to scholarships and to endowed chairs and professorships, among other things. Morehead State University is considering launching a capital campaign in the coming months. Western wants to increase its endowment to at least $50 million and increase private giving to at least $10 million annually.

Still, Kentucky schools have been behind the rest of the nation in soliciting donors, Davies said. "I don't think we are where we should be in all the institutions. But everyone is developing capability that is going to be very important in the next 10 to 20 years," said Davies, who spent two decades as executive director of Virginia's Council for Higher Education. "It's very clear that what Western Kentucky University's board did was to take the training wheels off its bicycle when it hired Gary Ransdell. It said, 'We are going to do this and do this right.'"

RANSDELL WAS vice president for fund raising at South Carolina's Clemson University where, during a five-year campaign, he helped secure $101 million in outright gifts and another $17 million in deferred gifts, which the university will receive after the deaths of the donor or one of the donor's family members.

Davies, in describing the prominence of fund raising, pointed to the work of presidents John Shumaker at the University of Louisville and Charles Wethington at the University of Kentucky.

Terry Mobley, the chief development officer at UK, said Wethington's work was instrumental in building the new $58 million William T. Young Library. About $22 million came from private donations, including $5 million from William Young to open the campaign.

"There is no question that the president's leadership made that entirely possible," said Mobley, who has been raising money for UK since the early 1970s. "You can look at a lot of other educational institutions across the country that have tried to raise money for libraries and they have not been successful."

Under Shumaker's administration at Louisville the last three years, annual donations have grown from about $21.6 million to $34.4 million last year.

Shumaker helped the school raise $83 million to build the $62 million Papa John's Cardinal Stadium and set a goal of increasing the university's endowment to $500 million from its current $212 million by 2008.

Rich Collins, the associate vice president for development at U of L, estimated that Shumaker spends 40 percent of his time raising money. The president flies across the country meeting donors and alumni groups.

Collins said, and he entertains at football and basketball games and during Derby week. He also opens the presidential mansion to donors, as was the case in December after it was refurbished.

Shumaker's wife, Lucy, also helps with fund raising, Collins said.

"That's very important because with many of our individual donors, the decision is made by the husband and wife," Collins said. "If the president's wife is involved in the discussions and the stewardship of the gift, it's a much more relaxed and genuine relationship that transcends merely writing a check."

Meanwhile, at some schools provosts oversee day-to-day business.

All of U of L Shumaker named Carol Garrison as provost. At Western, Ransdell named Barbara Burch as provost, the first in the school's history.

"Do you give up something if the president is not always on campus? Davies said. Yes," said Davies, of the postseconday council. "Can you, however, organize an institution so that the work of the university goes on while the president is doing largely external work? Yes."

Mobley, of UK, said he doesn't separate fund raising from academics.

"If you don't think the new library at the University of Kentucky is an academic enhancement then something is wrong," said Mobley, who said UK's donations have jumped to $18 million last year from less than $1 million in 1997.

When Ransdell interviewed with Western's board, he said the regents clearly wanted to improve the university and make it nationally competitive. Money plays a large role in reaching the goal. There must be scholarships to attract quality students and endowed professorships to recruit top faculty, Ransdell said.

Prior to Ransdell's arrival, Western had no such professorships. Now it has four, each endowed at $1 million. The interest on the investments provides the salary incentives or flows to research grants.

Davies said Western leads the state's other comprehensive universitieS — Eastern, Kentucky State, Morehead, Murray State and Northern — when it comes to private donations. But all Kentucky universities can do more, he said.

"I don't think Kentucky is way behind the ball game," Davies said. But I think the ball game is changing, and we better be changing with it."

MONEY STATE UNIVERSITIES RAISED

For fiscal year, July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998.

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Source: Offices of development from independent universities

By Wes Kendall, The Courier-Journal

"The notion of the president as a distinguished scholar... is far out of date."

Gordon Davies, Council on Postsecondary Education
Money flowing into WKU

University has received six seven-figure gifts during past year

By JASON KILEY Dec. 10, 1998
The Daily News

While Gordon Ford's $10.6 million donation to Western Kentucky University's business college is the most notable gift the school has received this year, it is by no means the only one.

After 92 years without receiving a seven-figure gift, Western has garnered six such gifts in the past year.

"We have never had a year like this, there is no question about that," said Thomas Hiles, the university's development and alumni relations vice president.

The university's endowment, a permanent fund for which only a general interest is spent, has risen from $19 million in 1992 to $25 million and Western officials expect that number to reach $50 million in the next few years.

The dramatic increase is due in part to Western being more proactive in getting out and asking for money, as well as the hiring of a proven fund raiser like President Gary Ransdell, Hiles said.

"Gary is the first president I've worked with who really understands how to campaign," Hiles said. "He is very experienced in explaining our needs and reaching out to people to ask for support."

Fund raising was one of Ransdell's most important jobs as a Western president candidate and he has not disappointed, according to Cornelius Martin, chairman of Western's Board of Regents.

"Gary's organizational skills, his determination, drive and desire create this success," Martin said.

Ransdell became Western president in November 1997.

"Upon coming here, he told me one of his main goals for Western was to raise $10 million a year, and he has certainly done that so far. He is the driving force behind these gifts, there is no doubt about that," Martin said.

Doing a great deal of homework and knowing his constituency are keys to success, Ransdell said.

"You have to know who has the capacity to be philanthropic and then who has the inclination to be sacrificially philanthropic," he said. "The logic to fund raising is knowing when someone's inclination rises to the level of their capacity."

As for why major gifts were lacking in the past, Ransdell said the answer is simple.

"They didn't ask," he said. "However, Western has done a marvelous job throughout our first 92 years of cultivating a love affair with its constituency. As I see it, our time is now and the law of reciprocity suggests that an awful lot of people who care deeply about Western are willing to invest in the future if we show them how to do so."

Another reason for the dramatic increase is the ripple effect, Hiles said.

"Donations like (Ford's) have a very significant impact on other people we are talking with and what they think about Western," Hiles said. "These kind of gifts tend to feed off of each other."

Perhaps the most important aspect of gifts the university has received is the positive effect it has on Western's endowment, Ransdell said.

"An endowment is the only thing that makes a university permanent. Buildings come and go, people change, but an endowment is forever. It is the only thing that stands the test of time, and I want to make Western permanent," Ransdell said. "We cannot earn our place among the best comprehensive universities without increasing our endowment. The gifts we receive today will affect my successor and the successors afterwards far greater than it does us. I want to help secure our future as we enhance our present."

### MONEY

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Source: Western Kentucky University

Gordon and Glenda Ford, who donated $10.6 million to Western Kentucky University's business college, are interviewed by a WKYU-TV reporter Monday. The university has received six seven-figure donations during the past year.
The job isn’t easy

WKU president has only been at it for a year, but what a year it was

By JASON RILEY
The Daily News

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell speaks in rapid bursts separated by long, thoughtful pauses.

Seemingly mulling over the possible effects of every sentence, he concentrates on his speech, sometimes talking as if reading his words from a TelePrompTer. He is cautious with these words, grabbing some back and changing them even before they are fully delivered.

While careful and controlled in his speech, Ransdell is not scared to rock the boat in his actions — if he believes the end-result of those actions brings about positive change.

This is a man who didn’t tentatively climb aboard, sit back and simply maintain the status quo when he became Western’s ninth full-time president on Nov. 1, 1997. He jumped in, grabbed both oars and took off toward goals he set for the university.

In his term as president, Western has:
- fired one basketball coach and hired another;
- started correcting long-standing pedestrian safety problems;
- began work on implementing sprinklers in dorms;
- raised composite ACT scores of freshmen;
- adopted a sexual harassment policy;
- started construction for added parking spaces on campus; and
- raised millions of dollars in gifts to the institution while putting together a strategic plan to make Western a leading university for its size in the next five years.

“I’m not one to sit on my hands and wait to make a decision when a decision needs to be made,” Ransdell said. “The thing one thing I heard the most as a candidate for this position was that Western had been sitting still for too long.

“The Board (of Regents) wanted a transformation, and the Western family was hungry for positive, constructive change. I view myself as a change agent, and not just change for the sake of change. Change for the sake of growth and improvement and realization of potential. If you are looking for a caretaker, you got the wrong guy.”

That he is not afraid of change is one part of Ransdell’s tenure that will receive few arguments. That all of these changes were good for both Western and the community is another issue.

One soft spot in his year on the Hill has been the controversy over his proposal to make a one-way loop around Western in an effort to aid student safety on University Boulevard, where eight students have been hit since 1992.

Feeling it would clog traffic along nearby streets and hurt neighboring businesses, community members pummeled this idea and lashed out at the president at a meeting in September.

The plan was scrapped and a

See JOB, 2C
A job

A more collaborative plan is being implemented.

"Hindsight is wonderful," Ransdell said. "But I didn't have the benefit of reaction and feedback. The important thing in that particular circumstance was that somebody had to take bold action for any change to occur and, until a major plan to change the traffic flow was put on the table, no change was likely to happen.

"I would rather put a bold plan on the table, take some hits and adjust accordingly, which is what happened. The intention was to bring about change and address the problem, and we've done that."

It was a solution that came with a price tag of strained relations between Western and the community. Those relations have started to heal.

"He made a mistake," said Arvin Vos, chairman of Western's Faculty Senate. "He got into it and probably should have looked a little more carefully before he did, and it backfired. But he wouldn't be human if he didn't make mistakes. He has learned from it and recognizes what he can and can't do."

"Overall, I think he has had an excellent first year and has developed a healthy relationship with the faculty."

Ransdell's job isn't an easy one. He works an average of 70 hours a week, is never really off duty and still doesn't have time to do everything he wants to do, he said. That includes spending more quality time with wife Julie and sons Patrick, 19, and Matthew, 15.

It is a job that often leaves the community or student body angry at Ransdell.

He would like to please all people, but that is simply not possible, he said.

"Western is completely dependent upon the local and statewide community to be successful, but my first priority has to be with the students, faculty, alumni and staff," he said.

Students seem to recognize this.

"I like him; he shows his face. He will walk by just like a normal person and talk to you," said Katie Hans, a Louisville freshman. "He doesn't seem like he is better than anyone else, and he genuinely seems like he cares about students and their issues."

Many students say enthusiasm and school spirit have grown considerably during the last year. This was one of Ransdell's main goals.

"There is a renewed enthusiasm both on and off campus," he said. "I sense a growing confidence and perhaps the most important objective I had coming in was to help us raise our sights as an institution."

Ransdell's vision of Western's future is bright. Immediate plans include addressing faculty compensation and restoring the quality of buildings on campus.

"I would not consider myself successful if I did not seriously turn the corner on restoring the physical beauty of this campus," Ransdell said.

As for long-term plans, Ransdell said Western has untapped potential.

"In five years, I see Western achieving documented recognition as a nationally prominent, comprehensive university," he said. "I want us to be nationally competitive in every thing we do, whether it is an academic program or an athletic program."

Western is on target to reach those goals, Ransdell said, but more changes will be made.

"The reality is that we are going to go bring about considerable change, and not everyone is going to be comfortable with and embrace these changes," he said. "But that is the reality of this position. We could walk along from day to day, maintain the status quo and be the same old Western in 10 years, but we will have failed to add value."

"That is not my style, and I would be most disappointed if I felt like Western wasn't growing and driving toward its potential."
Energetic Ransdell known for fundraising savvy

New WKU president draws rave reviews in first year on the Hill

Gary A. Ransdell is Western Kentucky University’s “first president to focus on private fundraising” and understands that “universities in Kentucky are now state-assisted, not state-funded,” said Steve Catron, a WKU Foundation board member.

The foundation is the university’s fund-raising arm.

Catron’s glowing analysis of the university president’s first year on campus echoes an almost universal impression those in the community, and at Western, have of Ransdell.

Ransdell offers a more measured and conservative read on his first year in Bowling Green. “I’d give it a B-plus,” said Ransdell, who was appointed WKU’s ninth president on Sept. 12, 1997. “We’ve gotten a lot done. We’ve made improvements to the physical plant, our enrollment is up (to about 15,000), and we had a productive legislative session.”

But, by his own estimation, he would have liked more. “By nature I am impatient,” Ransdell admitted.

By the time he officially began his duties as president in November, higher education in Kentucky was marshaling its forces for the semi-annual legislative session.

Ransdell went to work immediately lobbying the General Assembly, collectively and individually, for not only Western’s best interests, but with other university presidents for greater funding for higher education.

It is small wonder than Ransdell lists legislative funding among the university’s biggest accomplishments during his first year on campus.

Leading the list of grants for Western is an $18.5 million Technologies and Communications Building plus a much-needed $2.1 million matching fund for deferred maintenance.

The legislature also provided incentive money for Western for endowed faculty positions, “which will help with fund raising next year,” Ransdell said. “I was really encouraged with the legislative support for higher education.”

A very hands-on type of administrator, Ransdell cites the time he has spent with faculty and staff as important milestones during his first year.

That time helped him and the WKU Board of Regents to formulate a recently approved strategic plan of ambitious objectives for the next five years of campus life at Western.

“These are 44 specific performance indicators which will improve institutional effectiveness between now and the year 2003,” Ransdell said.

In the short range, Ransdell vows to raise Western’s sites “to be competitive in everything,” from athletics to academics, enhance the curriculum, improve the physical plant, improve safety and on-campus parking, improve the pool of applicants and student retention, as well as improve private financial support.

Tall order? Not for Ransdell, one of Kentucky’s youngest university presidents.

After receiving his bachelor’s degree in mass communications from Western in 1973, Ransdell earned a master of public service degree in

Continued on page 62
public administration. He earned a doctor of education degree from Indiana University in 1978.

He worked in Western’s alumni affairs office as an associate director of alumni affairs after returning from Indiana.

In the early 1980s he went to Southern Methodist University, where he headed up its alumni affairs office.

He brings an impressive track record to the Western helm. At 46, Dr. Ransdell joined Western after serving as vice president for administration and advancement at Clemson University in South Carolina, where he is credited with raising $101 million in outright donations and $17 million in deferred gifts. During his 11 years at Clemson, the annual cash flow of gifts went from $6 million to $28 million and the endowment grew from $22 million to $168 million.

His duties at Clemson not only included fund raising, but in 1995 he accepted additional duties as a result of university-wide reorganization, combining most of the university’s administrative operations. He was able to lead efforts to stabilize the institution’s budget, create a reserve capacity, redirect resources to the classroom and reduce bureaucracy.

Ransdell faces a similar chore in Bowling Green.

He told regents last year: “The good news is that Western hasn’t changed much” since he was here as a student in the 1970s. “We have wonderful character, traditions and values. The bad news is that Western hasn’t changed much,” either since he met, courted and married his wife, Julie, at WKU when they both were pursuing undergraduate degrees.

“Our aging campus has been neglected and we have some habits which may be holding us back, which we may need to change.”

—GARY RANSDELL

And, if early indications are a clue, Gary Ransdell may just be the “right man for the times.”

—GENE CANTRELL
Editorial right on target on learning

My compliments to you for the editorial that you ran on Sept. 17.

Your position of enhancing the status of higher learning is an essential theme if we are to improve the quality of life for all Kentuckians.

Thank you for making the important connection between higher education and economic, social and cultural prosperity ...

Gary A. Ransdell
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Western Kentucky University
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384 Old Scottsville Road
Bowling Green, KY 42103
An interview with Dr. Gary Ransdell
President of Western Kentucky University

by Lea Jacobson

Q: What are some of your favorite memories from your student days at Western?
A: First, I would have to say meeting my wife, Julie, and all that has gone into building twenty-five years of marriage and a family. Secondly, I acknowledge the faculty members I had as a student who were able to make something out of a relatively naive freshman. Finally, all the friends that Julie and I made here through our various organizations and associations such as our classes, residence halls, my fraternity and her sorority, my work with the Herald. All of those activities helped us to make lifelong friends.

Q: What changes in Western have you seen since being a student here?
A: I have seen a growth in the quality of faculty and research initiatives. I have also seen the campus deteriorate since my student days. I see reason to be encouraged about the university's potential, but I also see reason to be deeply concerned about some of its pressing needs.

Q: What are some of your accomplishments since beginning your tenure as President of Western?
A: I am beginning to see a changing attitude and a more national ambition. I have seen improvement as we address the physical plant problems. I have seen some success with external support and fundraising.

Q: What are your short-term goals for the university?
A: Our strategic plan for the next five years, which many of us have worked on, will be shared with the students and the community this week. It outlines many precise goals we would like to achieve over the next five years, including improving academic quality, recruitment, and retention of students and faculty.

Q: What are your goals for Western Kentucky University in 20 years?
A: My desire would be that anybody who knows higher education will be quick to put Western on a short list of the best comprehensive universities in the nation.

Q: Has the university suffered a decline in enrollment? If so, how does the administration intend to address this issue?
A: There have been modest declines in enrollment, and we would like to turn that around. We hope to have modest growth over the next few years in order to ensure financial stability. My more focused expectation, however, is to dramatically increase the number of applicants to Western in the future and accept a similar number as we do today, thereby improving the overall quality of the student body.

Q: How do you envision the relationship between the Western community and the Bowling Green community?
A: I would like to see Western faculty, staff, and students actively involved in the Bowling Green community and its programs and initiatives. I believe that their participation is even more important the their economic impact on the city, which is 110 million dollars in direct spending. That is important, but not as important, the University is also working hard to find ways to open the campus to the community and cause Bowling Green and Warren County residents to feel welcome on campus at any time. We're trying hard to create traffic and parking enhancements to do just that. I would like the entire community to look forward to participating in events on campus-athletic, musical, or otherwise. We hope many will join us for the festive tailgate atmosphere we are creating this fall.

Q: Any concluding thoughts?
A: I would like to emphasize what an honor it is for Julie and me to be back at Western in this capacity. We look forward to everyone in the Western family doing their share to help Western achieve its full potential.

The phrase "The Spirit Makes the Master", as seen in this engraving, was coined by Henry Hardin Cherry and was one of his favorite expressions. By 1930 those words had become part of the University. For nearly seven decades, students have absorbed them.

August 20 thru September 2, 1998
Ransdell is right man for Western

Outstanding universities set themselves lofty goals and impose the self-discipline required to achieve these goals.

The inauguration Friday of Gary Ransdell as the ninth president of Western Kentucky University was much more than the formal beginning of Ransdell's leadership – it was a public acknowledgement that Western has committed itself to amplifying into national prominence the excellence that the university already has achieved.

Ransdell is a messenger of change, of setting university sights still higher and of ensuring the co-partnership of students, faculty, administration and Western friends in enhancing the university’s reputation as a thriving center of learning.

All of this Ransdell already has made clear during the brief period during which he has guided Western. His message was the same Friday, telling his listeners that for the university to prosper intellectually and physically it must be prepared to change, to reach out and to set higher standards.

Western is prepared. Ransdell’s selection by the Western board of regents is telling evidence that the school is ready for the hard work that will enable it to become far more than another good regional university.

The timing could not be better for Ransdell to assume the leadership of this university in transition. Kentucky, prodded by Gov. Paul Patton, legislative leaders and countless Kentuckians who care about education and the state’s future, is awakening from a long educational slumber. There is a heightened awareness that Kentucky higher education has lagged and a growing realization that education holds a vital key to the future.

Western, guided by able past presidents, has been building. The foundations upon which Western is constructed are sound and they run deep.

Western has achieved excellence in many disciplines; it has won national prominence in several fields and is capable of propelling others into this category.

Ransdell, therefore, does not take up the challenges he outlined alone or empty-handed. He will write the history of his presidency on a university fabric already enriched by the talent, dedication and energy of faculty, administrations, staff and students, past and present.

Western has a tradition of success upon which to build. We are confident that oversight of this work has been entrusted to capable hands.
Native son returns to Hill

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
The Daily News

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell carries a good luck charm wherever he goes.

It was in his pocket when he interviewed for the job of university president and will be in his pocket Friday when he is inaugurated.

"I always have it," Ransdell said, pulling out a worn buckeye. "I'm never without one. That's why I was fascinated to hear about the history of the buckeye on campus."

Buckeyes - large, nut-like seeds - grow on dozens of trees across campus. They are rumored to bring good luck to those who carry them and fend off the curse of an evil eye.

While hard work has more to do with Ransdell's success, he has certainly been lucky, too. He plans to share some of the lucky charms with guests at his inauguration.

Western President Gary Ransdell talks with L.D. Brown Agricultural Exposition Center Director Darrell Towe. Ransdell was taking a tour of the university facility.

More than 1,000 guests are expected to participate in events this week leading up to the inauguration ceremony. It will be the final step in his long road back to campus.

The early years

Ransdell began his career in higher education with a red towel in one hand and a Western diploma in the other.

He graduated from Western in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in mass communications. He earned a doctor of education degree a year later from Indiana University.

Ransdell began his career as field representative for Western in the Office of University-School Relations and as associate director of alumni affairs.

He left Western in 1981 to become director of alumni relations and executive director of

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About this tab

This special publication was produced by the Daily News editorial department. Cover photograph is by Wales Hunter.

HILLTOPPER FOOTBALL

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- SEPTEMBER 3 - Tennessee-Martin 7 p.m.
  Opener - Thursday night
- SEPTEMBER 19 - Eastern Kentucky 7 p.m.
From Page 2

the alumni association at Southern Methodist University. Six years later, he went to Clemson, S.C., where he was named vice president for institutional advancement at Clemson University.

"When I left Western, I knew I needed to gain insight and experience in ways that would be difficult if I stayed," Ransdell said. "I wasn't willing to wait my turn at WKU and be subject to the career decisions of others."

Ransdell's take-charge attitude landed him in the final round of candidates when Western needed a president in the wake of then-President Thomas Meredith's resignation last year.

Less than two decades after leaving Western, Ransdell returned to lead it into the next century.

Leading the way

At 46, Ransdell is still learning.

Since being named Western's ninth president on Sept. 12, he has been busy learning about the university, meeting with campus groups and planning for the university's future.

"I've learned a little more about the importance of time management," he said during an interview between meetings. "I've also learned that e-mail isn't the time-efficient information tool it's cracked up to be."

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell grabs paperwork from his office as he prepares for meeting on campus.

Ransdell begins each day at 7:30 a.m. by reading 30 to 40 e-mail messages from faculty and staff members and students. Many require a response. After half an hour, he begins...
his agenda, which often includes meeting with other administrators, groups or community leaders.

Lunch is always a Pepsi and pack of crackers at his desk while he tries to catch up on his e-mail.

Evenings usually include campus events. He's often at ceremonies, performances and athletic events.

Even driving time is used to return telephone calls or tape replies to correspondence.

"I seldom allow too many moments to be underutilized," Ransdell said.

But while he stays busy, he also makes time for family.

The family man

Being a president is important, but so was Patrick Ransdell's last high school baseball game.

Western's president left Bowling Green at 7:30 a.m. that morning to make the eight-hour drive to Clemson, S.C., to watch his oldest son play ball.

"I don’t like missing anything they do," Gary Ransdell said. "Baseball has been something we've been able to share with both boys for many years."

Gary Ransdell coached sons Patrick, 18, and Matthew, 14, when they were in Little League. He wanted to see his son’s last high school game, even if it meant losing sleep.

Instead, he committed himself to improving Western's campus. Since taking the job, he has helped get funding to restore Western's campus. It is one of the missions he has set for the future.

When he retires in the distant future, Ransdell said he wants to be remembered for being a president who left an important impact on the intellectual and physical development of Western.

For luck in that endeavor and others, he plans to plant a tree at the president's home.

A buckeye tree, of course.

He made the drive to Clemson and back to Bowling Green the same day.

Gary Ransdell said the most difficult part of his time at Western has been away from his sons and wife, Julie.

"He's a family man above everything," Julie Ransdell said. "I think it's what centers him as a person."

Julie Ransdell said she's looking forward to moving to Bowling Green. She and Matthew will move into the president's home on Chestnut Street near the end of May.

The couple's oldest son will graduate from high school June 1. He hasn't decided if he will attend Western or another university.

Even after being married for more than two decades, Julie Ransdell said her husband's ability to do so much still impresses her.

"His energy level amazes me," she said. "Just thinking about it wears me out."

She's not the only one who sings her husband's praises.

Gary Ransdell has made many new friends and gotten reacquainted with many old ones since coming back to Western.

Looking ahead

Gary Ransdell has changed in the time he was away from Western.

The university has changed, too. When he toured the campus as a candidate for president, he didn't hide his surprise that the university wasn't in the shape he remembered.
Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell shares a laugh with junior Laura Lewis (right) of La Grange and Jennell Verow, a Bowling Green freshman.

**WKU: Looking forward**

As inauguration approaches, new Western leader plans for future

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT

_The Daily News_

A year ago, Gary Ransdell knew he wanted to be Western Kentucky University's next president.

It took time, hard work and focus, but he prevailed. He took office last fall and will be inaugurated Friday as Western's ninth president.

Now, it's time to look ahead. With time, hard work and focus he plans to build Western's future.

On Tuesday, he shared his broad plans for the university's fund raising, faculty members, sports programs, academics, maintenance and reputation.

**Fund raising**

Within five years, Ransdell wants to have $50 million in the university’s endowment. The university endowment now has about $19 million.

"We simply must insure the university's long-term future by building an endowment, which is the only thing that ensures permanency," he said. "A strong endowment is also the one margin which we have the capacity to control."

Ransdell wants to increase giving from alumni and others, he said.

"I want to raise the annual cash flow of gifts from about $3.5 million to $10 million in five years," he said. "I want to help us achieve a deferred gift inventory - estate, trusts, wills - of $25 million in five years. We just have $2 million or $3 million now."

He also wants to increase alumni participation in annual fund drives. About 14 percent give now; Ransdell wants to increase that to at least 20 percent.

See WESTERN, 2A

502-781-1700 e-mail, dnews@bgm.mindspring.com
Academics
Ransdell wants to strengthen standards for incoming freshmen on Western’s main campus, he said.
“I want to reach a level where the average A.C.T. score is 22.5 (out of a possible 30) within five years,” he said. “I want to also raise the average high school class ranking and grade point average of students on the main campus.”

“At the same time, I want us to be fully accessible through the community college, extended campus programs and through our distance learning programs,” he said.

Ransdell wants to improve Western’s graduation rate by increasing the student retention rate by 2 percent a year for five consecutive years, he said.

Faculty
Ransdell wants Western to be the university of choice for quality faculty members, he said. Better pay, benefits and enhanced facilities will help attract and retain quality faculty members, he said.

Sports
“I want us to be nationally competitive in any sport we offer,” Ransdell said. “But more importantly, I want us to continue to recruit and compete with students of high character, who will always represent this university well on the field, on the court, in the classroom and community.”

He also wants them to focus on their future.
“I want our athletes to play hard, work hard and earn a degree, and use their athletic experience as an impetus for success later in life,” he said.

Facilities
Campus maintenance will receive as many university funds as possible during the next several years, Ransdell said.

A number of improvements and renovations are being suggested.
Some proposed renovations will be presented to the university’s Board of Regents this month, Ransdell said.
Among other improvements, priorities will include renovations at Van Meter and Gordon Wilson halls, he said.
Cherry Hall also will have windows replaced, heating and air conditioning will get work in many buildings and electrical work will be done across campus.

Reputation
Ransdell wants Western to be competitive, he said.
“We have to earn the recognition to be included among the best undergraduate comprehensive universities in the nation,” he said.
Western a little too Western, president answers at luncheon

By the Daily News Dec 18, 1997

Western Kentucky University has been hiring too many of its graduates for its own good, the university's new president said Wednesday.

"I think we've gone beyond a healthy regard in terms of in-breeding, I guess you could call it, and it's probably holding us back a little," President Gary Ransdell said.

His statements came during a question-and-answer session at Tuesday's Bowling Green Kiwanis Club luncheon.

"Is Western a little too Western?" asked Mickey Riggs, a Kiwanian and Western alumnus, referring to an institutional review released this month that suggested the university was hiring too many of its graduates.

"Yes, I agree with it," Ransdell answered. "The university has had a propensity in the past to hire people who have come up through the ranks at Western. That's good and bad.

"You need people who understand the traditions and have that extra passion, but it also takes people who have been somewhere else and understand how things can and do get done."

Ransdell is a Western graduate and worked after graduation in the university's alumni affairs office. For the past 19 years, however, he has held administrative positions outside of Western. Before becoming Western's president this fall, he was a vice pres-

ident at Clemson (S.C.) University. Ransdell also outlined other ideas he sees as essential. The institution needs to shift from a regional university to one of national significance, he said.

"I don't see anything regional about Western," Ransdell said. "We need a much more national mission."

One of the keys to achieving a national reputation is to focus time, money and energy on specific academic programs that can earn prominence for Western, he said.

The journalism and photojournalism programs likely will be the first on campus to get special attention, he said. A new $18.5 million communications and technology building is planned, pending funding in the state's 1998 budget, and $1.2 million in matching money is available from the state to establish a "center of excellence," he said.

"Some departments will be de-emphasized or eliminated to redirect funds to the centers of excellence," Ransdell said.

Ransdell also said the campus' physical appearance and infrastructure are in serious need of improvement. The state is offering $2.1 million in maintenance funds if Western can raise that amount, he said.

"The campus looks about the same as it did when I left," Ransdell said.

Ransdell also called the institutional review "a very constructive document." The report contained 57 recommendations for the university to improve.

"Don't pay too much attention to that newspaper article that portrayed it as negative," Ransdell said. "It's thorough and unbiased. By and large, most of those recommendations we're going to take very seriously. It sets a benchmark. It's not a panacea that solves all our problems, but it will help us get there."
WKU president faces first controversy

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
*The Daily News*

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell, barely a few weeks into his tenure, has found himself in the midst of reports that a friend in charge of a university institutional review helped him land the job and also worked to bolster the president's salary.

An article in Tuesday’s issue of Western’s student newspaper, the College Heights Herald, said James Fisher, who headed the institutional review, is a long-time friend of Ransdell.

That’s true, Ransdell said.

The article also said that “Fisher, who is a good friend of … Ransdell, was hired last spring to negotiate the president’s contract for an additional $10,000.” That incorrectly implies that Fisher worked on the contract for Ransdell, who had not been selected as a candidate as of last spring. Ransdell said he did not get any information about Western from Fisher and did not have discussions with him after he was named as a candidate and Fisher was selected to work on the review.

“Western’s student regent told the Herald that Ransdell got the job because he was knowledgeable about the university and had done his homework. “But did Ransdell have a tutor?” the Herald asked.

Fisher had given Ransdell career advice in the past, the president said, but most of Fisher’s knowledge about Western came after Ransdell was named president.

Ransdell said he was most upset because the story implied that Fisher gave him information about Western that helped him get the job as president.

The story said Western’s student regent told the Herald that Ransdell got the job because he was knowledgeable about the university and had done his homework.

“The bigger question would be if the university hired a president who didn’t know the leaders in higher education,” he said.

Adams said Herald stories should present the facts and let readers draw their own conclusions.

The reporter who wrote the story had no comment.
Western's president plans to have vision statement by 1998

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
The Daily News Dec. 6, 1997

FALLS OF ROUGH -- Western Kentucky University's president and board of regents spent two days at Rough River Falls State Park planning for the university's future.

Among the discussions were updating Western's vision statement and mission, creating one document that maps the university's future, and studying an institutional review released Thursday.

Western President Gary Ransdell said he hopes to have a vision statement by January and to "get the show on the road," by working toward the university's goals.

But the board and Ransdell must decide what those goals are.

Ransdell said he would like to have a single document that combines plans from the planning documents "Moving to a New Level" and "Western XXI," and reflects some suggestions from an institutional review and the goals of recently passed higher education reforms.

He hopes to have the document drafted by April and finished by the end of spring.

"I want to have one plan," he told the board.

Faculty Regent Ray Mendel said it is important to have a game plan that addresses tough issues raised in "Western XXI" that haven't been acted on.

Among them is addressing what should be done about programs that have few graduates. "Western XXI" touches on eliminating some programs and redirecting money to others, but so far nothing has been done, he said.

The institutional review also recommends cutting some programs.

Other concerns of regents involved creating programs of distinction. A list of programs unique to the state and capable of drawing national recognition needs to be drawn up in the coming months, they said.

Journalism and technology top the list, along with forensics, educational television and public radio and several others, said Barbara Burch, vice president for academic affairs.

The regents also briefly discussed an athletics review that has been called for to study the role of athletics at Western, its relationship to fund raising, its efficiency and current conference affiliations with costs and benefits of alternatives.

The review, which will be done by Fred Obear, chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, should be completed by summer.

Also in the coming months, a board of regents committee will examine the institutional review and consider recommendations.
Ransdell committed to improvements at WKU-Glasgow campus

New WKU President visits Glasgow campus

BY RONNIE ELLIS
Times Staff Writer

Sporting a shiner from a benefit staff-student basketball game the night before, new Western Kentucky University President Dr. Gary A. Ransdell brought a positive -- and challenging -- message to Glasgow and the Glasgow WKU campus Thursday.

Ransdell, in only his fourth day in his new position, told civic leaders and members of the Glasgow WKU Advisory Board that he was committed to improving facilities and curriculum in Glasgow.

Ransdell said that upgrading the Glasgow campus facilities is the number one off-campus funding priority of Western in the upcoming legislative session. And renovated or new facilities for the local campus is the number three priority for Western over all.

But, Ransdell told the Advisory Committee, "We need you in this community to take the lead in the General Assembly. If you take the lead and go after this for Glasgow, not for Western, we'll have a chance to get it. And we'll support you in every way we can."

Ransdell is a Western graduate who took over as president after serving as Vice President for Administration and Advancement at Clemson University in South Carolina.

He also served as Director of Alumni Relations at Southern Methodist University in Texas after previously serving as Associate Director of Alumni Affairs at Western and teaching higher education administration.

Ransdell toured the Glasgow campus, local industries, and addressed the Noon Rotary Club Thursday before meeting with the Advisory Committee.

He told the group that it would be their decision on how to improve facilities in Glasgow, whether by renovating current structures on Liberty Street or constructing new facilities elsewhere.

"But I can tell you after touring these buildings, I know enough about construction to know this would be a tough renovation," Ransdell said. "There's bound to be asbestos and ADA problems."

Ransdell said he and Western are committed to serving the region, noting that students from 34 different countries are enrolled at the Glasgow campus. But, he said, the university is also committed to becoming a national leader in academic areas such as Journalism and Photo Journalism.

He said a new $18 million Communications and Technology Center at Western is the university's top priority for funding in the 1998 General Assembly. He said that will allow the university to pursue Gov. Paul Patton's challenge of each regional university becoming a national center of excellence in a specific area.

Ransdell also said the university is seeking deferred maintenance funding from the legislature because 85 percent of the buildings on the Bowling Green campus are 26 years or older.

He said he hoped more four-year degree programs could also be brought to Glasgow. But, he continued to emphasize the need for Glasgow leaders and the advisory committee to lobby the General Assembly for funding for the local community.

"I know enough about politics," Ransdell said, "to know that when it comes time to compromise, I don't want Western to be in a position to have to trade an $18 million dollar facility for a $5 million one."

Advisory Board Chairman Freddie Travis said local members and supporters of Western enthusiastically received Ransdell and his message.

"The meeting was very positive in every way," Travis said. "He pledged his support for facilities and curriculum improvements we want at Glasgow, and we're going to work with him hand in hand."

WKU President Visits Glasgow -- New Western Kentucky University President Dr. Gary A. Ransdell is pictured above addressing members of the WKU Glasgow Advisory Board and local community leaders Thursday. Ransdell told the group that a new facility at Glasgow as Western's number one off-campus funding priority.
Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell looks over paperwork today during his first day at the university helm. Ransdell is Western’s ninth president.

Many changes expected as new WKU president takes school’s reins

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
The Daily News

There’s a vacant parking spot in front of the office of Western Kentucky University’s new president.

In his first official day on the job, Gary Ransdell started his morning by walking a little farther than his predecessors. The new president parked behind Wetherby Administration Building, so that someone else could use the parking spot that past presidents had reserved.

It’s just one of many changes on campus that will come as the university enters the Ransdell era.

“It feels like I’ve got lots to do,” he said, grinning.

Since the Board of Regents picked Ransdell in September for the university’s presidency, he has met with Western’s Faculty Senate, Student Government Association, vice presidents, community leaders and lawmakers.

Today he will meet with Mayor Eldon Renaud, state Transportation Secretary James Codell, SGA President Keith Coffman and state Rep. Jody Richards, D-Bowling Green, to discuss ways to make University Boulevard safer for students. Five students have been hit at crosswalks there since 1992.

Ransdell also is looking ahead. In the next several months, he will visit cities throughout western Kentucky to tout the university and will meet with every Western academic group, administrative unit, residence hall group and student organization.

He also will take a retreat with regents in early December to discuss Western’s future and an institutional review that should be completed by then. He hopes to use that document to define Western’s mission and to update the planning documents Western XXI and Moving to a New Level.

“There is no need to start over or consume the campus with a long, arduous planning process,” he wrote today in a memo to faculty and staff members. “The building blocks are in place. Our task will be to ensure timeliness, relevancy and accountability.”

Ransdell, a Western graduate who came to the presidency here after serving as a vice president at Clemson (S.C.) University, said he also is looking forward to the 1998 General Assembly session. He hopes to get new funding from the Council on Postsecondary Education and money for deferred maintenance. He also expects to make plans for a new facility in Glasgow.

Ransdell said he’s ready for the challenges.

“We’re ready to go,” he said. “A lot of time and thought has been put into what we will be doing.”
Gary Ransdell is sworn in as Western Kentucky University’s ninth president. (More, Page 5A.)

Ransdell sworn in

By the Daily News

It was a happy homecoming today for former Western Kentucky University student Gary Ransdell.

Ransdell officially took over the reigns of the university after being sworn in as Western’s ninth president.

“I’m really looking forward to getting started,” Ransdell said after Warren Circuit Judge John Minton administered the oath of office on the first day of Western’s homecoming weekend.

Ransdell is leaving Clemson University in Clemson, S.C. where he was vice president for administration and advancement.

Regents approve new president’s contract

By the Daily News  Nov. 2/97

Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell’s contract was approved Friday by the university’s board of regents.

Ransdell, who was sworn in Friday as Western’s new president, will receive $149,000 a year in salary. The contract includes a recommendation that $12,000 be provided as an annual expense allowance from the WKU Foundation.

Ransdell replaced former President Thomas Meredith, who left this year to become chancellor of the University of Alabama system.
Gary Ransdell and his wife, Julie, pose as friends take their picture at the President's Home at Clemson University during a farewell lunch for Julie.

By JOE IMEL
The inside News
Clemson, S.C. - Family is a theme that runs through Gary Ransdell's life, whether it's his family at home - wife Julie and sons Patrick and Matthew - or the 14,000-member extended family he soon will lead at Western Kentucky University.

"The Western family and the Western experience are important to me," Ransdell says while winding his way through a typically hectic day at Clemson University. "I want to bring back the magic that makes Western unique."

Part of what others say he will add to that magic is being equally as good giving direction as at listening.

"He's got time for everybody and he's worried if he doesn't," Clemson University administrative assistant Marie Stancel says. "He is very thorough. He gives such good directions. He is very gracious. Everything is 'please' and 'thank you.'"

Ransdell, 45, was named Western's ninth president Sept. 12. He will leave his post as vice president for administration and advancement at Clemson University in South Carolina and begin his work on The Hill on Nov. 1.

His old Kentucky home
Ransdell's life is heavily rooted in Kentucky. He was born in Louisville, where his father was the chief plant layout engineer for International Harvester and his mother was a homemaker who took care of him and his older brother and sister.

He got his first taste of Western when he visited his older brother Deny, while Deny attended the university. His older sister, Anetta, also attended school in Bowling Green.

Ransdell's father graduated with a non-traditional degree in engineering from the General Motors Institute.

"He always encouraged us to get a college education and to take advantage of the college experience, both socially and culturally," Ransdell says. "There was never any question that I would get a college degree."

"Or from where that degree would come."

It was during his days at Western that Ransdell met Julie, who was also from Louisville. Gary Ransdell, a Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity member in spring 1971, met Julie Ransdell, then a Chi Omega sorority member, at a fraternity mixer.

"We didn't have much money so we spent a lot of our time sitting in Downing University Center or holding hands and walking across campus," Ransdell recalls. "I remember many a night hustling to beat the curfew at Gilbert Hall."

For newly appointed Western Kentucky University President Gary Ransdell, The Hill has changed a lot since the 1970s and 1980s. Not to mention that things will be a little more hectic than his days as a student. Despite all that, coming back to Bowling Green will always be like being home again.

"Julie and I, we really clicked," he remembers.

They were married Dec. 30, 1972 - during the Christmas holiday, so that friends and family members could attend. Both were still students - Gary Ransdell received his bachelor's degree in mass communication in 1973 from Western and his master's degree in public administration in 1974 from WKU and Julie Ransdell, who was in the Class of 1973, delayed getting her bachelor's degree for a year to work within the Western administration.

See HOME, 2A

Right: Gary Ransdell talks with a member of the Clemson University Guide Association, a group that Ransdell oversaw, during a visit to the commons area at Clemson University. Below: Ransdell works on his laptop computer in the Clemson University vice president's office. Already, a box labeled "Western incoming" sits on Ransdell's desk as he nears his starting date as Western Kentucky University president.
degree until 1975 "so we could have food on our table and clothes on our back," Gary Ransdell says. "She kept us fed and clothed," he says.

Once Ransdell received his master's degree, Julie Ransdell finished her. She received a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1975 and began teaching at Hiseville Elementary School in Barren County.

After moving to Indiana for a period, the Ransdells later returned to Kentucky and Julie Ransdell taught in Russellville.

The couple decided it was important to first concentrate on education to provide a more stable family environment, but eight years later decided the time was right to start a family.

They still believe in the importance of concentrating on education: "Julie Ransdell will stay at Clemson with Patrick, so that he can complete his senior year of high school, and Matthew, who will be a high schooler next year."

"We wanted to make sure the boys get what they need," Ransdell says. "The rest of the Ransdell family will move to Bowling Green at the end of the school year."

When it comes to family, Ransdell explains: "Family comes first. "My family is very important to me."

Ransdell says on his way to show off the family's favorite member, an active Dalmatian named Maggie.

With Ransdell, others say, "it's purely "what you see is what you get."

Staedeli, who was on the search committee that hired Ransdell, said of a devoted family man and special co-worker, "I worked with him for all 11 years and as a family man I don't know many that are better," she says. "The first thing he does when the baseball schedule comes out is to make sure every game is marked on his calendar."

"Whenever I have free time, I spend it with my boys," Ransdell says. "We play baseball or go to the batting cages. I coached Little League, but I'm retired now."

During a stop at his home in South Carolina, Ransdell takes pride in showing off the family project: a fish pond.

"It was my oldest son's idea to have a fish pond," he says. "We built it over a weekend and have loved it ever since."

Exciting times and choices

Ransdell earned his doctoral degree from Indiana University in 1978 and made a return visit to The Hill, this time as an associate director of alumni affairs.

It was a burgeoning time at the school: "Western Kentucky University was really growing at that time," he remembers. "There was big growth. Downing University Center, the College of Education Building, Cravens Library, Ivan Wilson and (Pierce-Ford Tower) were built."

"You knew that you were at a place growing and vibrant.

It's that perception of vibrancy and a healthy future he wants Western to exude.

"Western Kentucky University is very fortunate to have people, events and things throughout its history that make it unique," he says. "The character of the campus is great. There are a lot of things that are very special to Western."

Such as Big Red - the bright fuzzy embodiment of Western. It was Ransdell, along with Ron Beck and Ralph Carey, who talked then-President Donald Zacharias into unveiling the mascot at a basketball game in 1979.

"Ralph made it work. He was an instant hit," Ransdell says.

He also believes others have a strong role to play.

"We will pay attention to the students, faculty and constituents. We'll work hard but we'll have fun doing it. I am looking forward to meeting new people and making new partnerships," he says.

"The people - that's what makes the magic at a university, the people."

The proof that he believes in his words can be seen as he walks across campus. His trek is punctuated with waves and chit-chats with students and faculty members at the 16,000-student school.

Saying goodbye

Ransdell is spending the final month in Clemson finishing tasks and getting ready to move to Bowling Green - including saying farewell to those with whom he has established strong relationships during his 11 years at Clemson.

For many, it's tough.

"I was shocked and saddened to hear he was leaving," says the Rev. Steve Price of Fort Hill Presbyterian Church. "We need him around here for another 15 years. His joy comes from helping other people. I really believe that."

"He stays calm. He is a voice of reason. He sees the big picture," Price says. "He brings the best out in people."

Allison Trick, a Clemson University graduate student from Woodbridge, Va., echoes some of those feelings.

I know we hate to see him go," she says. "I'm sure the university is going to miss him."
Much to learn for new WKU president

Gary Ransdell will have his own priorities as the new president of Western Kentucky University when he assumes the $149,000 a year position in November.

Obviously, one of these priorities will be to solidify his relationship with Gov. Paul Patton. Lt. Gov. Steve Henry and state legislators, assuring them that Western remains committed to the higher education overhaul that Patton brilliantly engineered and most area legislators enthusiastically embraced. Ransdell already has offered public assurances on this point.

Those who know Ransdell say he will bring a deft hand and innovative ideas to Western and enthusiasm and charisma into his relationships with others. The latter qualities especially will stand him in good stead.

Ransdell was selected over another candidate, James Ramsey, whose qualifications and contributions to Western and Kentucky are widely known and appreciated on campus and far beyond Bowling Green.

Ramsey is Western's vice president for finance and administration and also serves part-time as Kentucky's budget director. Soon after Western regents picked Ransdell for the presidency, Patton announced that Ramsey would join his staff full-time.

No wonder. Ramsey is THE financial expert on Kentucky's higher education reform act and knows more about where the money — including that with Western's name on it — is squirreled away than does any other person.

That is one reason the appointment of Ransdell caught many, including legislators, by surprise. There apparently were no lines of communication between the regents and legislators, who must fight Western's financial battles in Frankfort, during the presidential selection.

The construction of Western's new technology and journalism building is likely to go forward, but other intended state incentives for Western could get lost in the higher education reform act maze.

Westerners who supported Ramsey for the presidency cannot afford to waste time looking back.

Patton, Ramsey and legislators are too committed to the advancement of higher education to allow differences of opinion over presidential selection to stand in the way of Western's rise to educational eminence. But not standing in the way is one thing: providing active assistance is another. Western has enjoyed the latter and should work to continue this relationship.

Ramsey was the choice of many. But Ransdell, who holds degrees from Western, was the choice of many others. He also was the choice of those who had the right and the responsibility to make the decision, the Western regents.

Those who love Western will respect this decision and help Ransdell become the best president Western ever had.

We congratulate him on his new assignment and join with others in welcoming him and his family back into the Western and Bowling Green fold.
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gary Ransdell, who has two degrees from Western Kentucky University, is its next president.

By RICHARD WILSON
The Courier-Journal

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — When he entered Western Kentucky University as a freshman in 1969, Gary Ransdell had no clear-cut career plans.

But nearly five years later, as a WKU graduate assistant, he decided the university world was where he wanted to be. And he acknowledged that dreams of becoming president of his alma mater sometimes flickered through his mind.

No dreams are necessary anymore for Ransdell, 45, who was named Western’s ninth president yesterday by the school’s board of regents.

"Julie (his wife) and I are honored once again to be home," Ransdell said shortly after his unanimous selection, addressing the board and the well-wishers and observers who filled the room. He succeeds Thomas Meredith, now president of the University of Alabama system.

Ransdell edged out James Ramsey, the state’s budget director and WKU’s vice president for finance and administration, for the presidency. Ransdell said he has not talked to Ramsey yet and does not know his plans, but hopes he remains at WKU.

Ransdell, now vice president for administration and advancement at Clemson University, has deep roots in the hilltop campus in Bowling Green where he earned two degrees; met, courted and married his wife; and worked in the alumni office before moving on to then-greener educational pastures 17 years ago.

He grew up in Louisville and is a graduate of the old Durrett High school. Those who know him well call him well-qualified to lead Western. They describe him as an energetic, hard-working, conscientious administrator with a penchant for detail.

"Dynamic' is probably a good description for Gary Ransdell," said his current boss, Clemson President Constantine Curris.

"He is creative; he is an extrovert; and he has an unbelievable work See WKU

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WKU picks Clemson official as president

Continued from Page One

ethic. He will hit the ground running and will never slow up. My guess is that some people may be hard-pressed to keep up with him," added Curris, a former president of Murray State University.

Curris predicted Ransdell will be a strong president.

"He will bring many of the same strengths as (former WKU Presidents) Kelly Thompson, Dero Downing and Tom Meredith have brought, with a strong focus on building the relationships between the university and the broad public," Curris said. "He is also a very capable development officer. He's really in the big leagues in that field."

RANSDELL LED a highly successful $117 million fund drive at Clemson a few years ago and now heads another effort with a goal of more than $200 million.

Mississippi State University President Donald Zacharias, one of those who nominated Ransdell for the WKU presidency, said he spotted Ransdell's "leadership potential" years ago when Zacharias was Western's president and Ransdell was the school's associate alumni director.

"I saw (his) potential for future leadership, and that certainly would include the possibility of someday serving as a university president," Zacharias said.

He said he had tried to hire Ransdell as Mississippi State's development director (chief fund-raiser) several years ago when Ransdell was alumni director at Southern Methodist University. But Ransdell rejected the offer because he wanted a vice presidency, Zacharias said.

The man who did pluck Ransdell from SMU, former Clemson President Max Lennon, calls Ransdell "one of the most organized people I've ever met. I thought pretty early on our greatest challenge would be to keep him," added Lennon, now president of Mars Hill College in North Carolina. Even during his early years at Clemson, Lennon said, Ransdell was recruited by several universities who wanted him as president.

"GARY Listens well. He has a very high regard for other people and their thoughts and their abilities," Lennon added.

In brief remarks yesterday, Ransdell said he has no immediate plans to change things at WKU when he becomes president Nov. 10. "There's much to learn, so (my) first priority will be to listen and observe as much as possible for an important period of time."

He said he also wants a thorough review of WKU's planning documents to assure that they coincide with the state's goals for higher-education reform.

Ransdell also said WKU has the potential to achieve national recognition for teaching and strength in selected academic programs. "We will think national, but certainly act regional," he said. We will dedicate resources to those priorities which will ensure value for cost and transform Western into a university worthy of national recognition."

Regents' Chairwoman Peggy Loafman said Ransdell will be given a one-year renewable contract that will pay $149,000 the first year, and he will get benefits that include an expense account and president's home.

Though the regents had initially concentrated on four candidates, the search narrowed earlier this week to Ransdell and Ramsey; they returned to Bowling Green for private meetings with the regents.

Ramsey, who has served as state budget director since 1985 in addition to holding his post at Western, will stay on in the budget job for eight more months.

Gov. Paul Patton's office announced yesterday that Ramsey is taking a leave of absence from WKU until next April 15 to work full-time in Frankfort as budget director.

Ramsey had been considered by many to be a favorite for the Western presidency.

Ray Mendel, WKU's faculty regent, acknowledged yesterday that many professors had backed Ramsey. But Mendel said he believes Ransdell ultimately will win them over.

"The faculty right now doesn't know a great deal about Dr. Ransdell. I think after they see some of the skills he brings to the job, particularly character and integrity, I think the faculty will warm up to him very quickly," Mendel said.

Student regent Keith Coffman said Ransdell will be a student-oriented president with an open-door policy.

"He's been here. He knows what it's like to be a student here," Coffman said.

In keeping with that thought, near the end of yesterday's meeting of the regents, Ransdell asked all WKU students in the room to stand. "They're the reason we're here," he said.

GARY A. RANSDELL

AGE: 45

EDUCATION: Western Kentucky University, bachelor's degree in mass communication, 1973; master's degree, public service, 1974. Indiana University, doctorate in higher-education administration, 1978.


FAMILY: Wife Julie, a WKU alumna; sons Patrick, 17, and Matthew, 13.
WKU to name president today

Clemson vice president, who has ties to Western, expected to be chosen

By RICHARD WILSON The Courier-Journal

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — After a lengthy search, the Western Kentucky University Board of Regents will meet today and is expected to name Clemson University Vice President Gary Ransdell as WKU’s new president.

Ransdell, a WKU graduate, was among four finalists who have visited the campus, met with various groups and been interviewed at least twice by board members.

Yesterday Ransdell declined to comment on whether he has been offered or accepted the presidency. "I do look forward to formal action (by the board) tomorrow," he said.

The search narrowed earlier this week when Ransdell and another finalist, WKU Vice President Jim Ramsey, met privately with the regents Monday night in Bowling Green. Ransdell, in an interview Wednesday, acknowledged the meeting but declined to discuss the nature of the session.

The College Heights Herald, Western’s student paper, reported yesterday without attribution that the regents would name Ransdell today as the school’s ninth president, succeeding Thomas Meredith, who left this summer to become president of the University of Alabama system.

Ramsey, who is also state budget director, declined Wednesday to say whether he expected to get the job.

But he said he planned "to meet with Gov. (Paul) Patton to discuss further options with the administration." He declined to elaborate.

Ramsey became a vice president at WKU in July 1992. He has been state budget director since November 1995, when Patton was elected governor. He was also a key Patton insider in the governor’s successful effort earlier this year to revamp the state’s higher-education system.

The other finalists are Edward Hammond, president of Fort Hays State University in Kansas; and Eugene Payne, an Austin, Texas, insurance executive and former administrator at three Texas universities.

Regents have been tight-lipped on their plans.

Ransdell earned two degrees from Western, where he later taught courses in higher education and was associate director of alumni affairs from 1978 to 1981.

Hammond, a former University of Louisville vice president for student affairs and president at Fort Hays since 1987, indicated yesterday that he had not been told whether he was still in the running. He said he talked to Peggy Loafman, the regents’ chairwoman, earlier this week and that she assured him no decision had been made.

Payne could not be reached for comment.
4 finalists chosen for top WKU post

Ramsay, Ransdell have close ties to the university

By CYNTHIA EAGLES The Courier-Journal

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — After a search in which candidates were kept largely secret, the regents at Western Kentucky University this week introduced three of their four finalists for president.

On Monday it was James Ramsay, Western’s vice president of finance and administration who is also on loan to Frankfort as state budget director.

On Tuesday it was Gary Ransdell, vice president of administration and advancement at Clemson University in South Carolina.

And yesterday Western was host to Edward Hammond, president of Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kan.

The fourth finalist, insurance executive Eugene Payne of Austin, Texas, is scheduled to visit next Wednesday.

After Payne’s visit, Western’s regents will go into closed session to decide whether they have a clear choice for the successor to Thomas Meredith, who left Western in May to become chancellor of the University of Alabama system.

It has been an impressive unveiling, giving anyone interested the chance to meet and assess the finalists.

There have been breakfasts with community leaders, questions from a focus group and open meetings with faculty, staff and students.

After each session, participants are being asked to mail, fax, call or e-mail their opinions to the regents, many of whom have been sitting in on the sessions as well.

“The goal was to see how they interact with the campus community and also the local community and the business leaders and students,” said regent Cornelius Martin of Bowling Green.

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WKU regents present four finalists for presidency

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Green, who heads the search committee.

Many observers think the regents will have a tough time deciding among the finalists, particularly between Ramsay and Ransdell, both of whom have strong ties to Western.

With Ramsay, Western promotes someone with valuable Frankfort connections and insight. With Ransdell, the school gains a proven fundraiser.

“I’m just glad I don’t have to vote,” said Bowling Green attorney Kevin Brooks, who is both a fraternity brother and friend of Ransdell’s and chairman of the Bowling Green-Warren County Chamber of Commerce, which endorsed Ramsay a few weeks ago.

But the regents and others directly involved in the search insist that no candidate has an edge. In fact, if appears to be a badge of honor this week to be seen as impartial and open-minded until all the candidates have had their say.

“This process is much more careful, much more open and much more professional than what we had in the past,” said Faculty Senate Chairman Arvin Vox, a philosophy professor.

He and other faculty and staff representatives said they have been pleased to see that the regents are serious about getting their input, and serious about considering all four candidates equally.

“It is the most important decision that we will ever make as regents,” said Regents chairwoman Peggy Loftman. “We’re wanting someone who will make Western the leader in (higher) education reform and who will take us to the next level, into the next century.”

The “next level” is “more than a regional university,” she said.

“We want to be nationally known in more of our programs. And we want to make sure when someone graduates from Western Kentucky University, their degree is something they’re proud of and say is the reason they’re successful.”

Accordingly, this week’s finalists tailored their pitches to highlight

Ramsay

Ransdell

Hammond

Payne

graduate and former staffer who left campus years ago to pursue administrative experience at other insti-

tutions.

“We grew up here, and the last few years we’ve been away at other good universities getting the experi-

ence necessary to come back to Western,” Ransdell said.

He also addressed the insider issue by talking about the likely need for Western to hire someone as a legisla-
tive liaison to free up the president for other duties. Ransdell said “governmental affairs” staffs “are a common phenomenon in higher educa-

tion.”

Ramsay’s pitch also focused on his fund-raising experience, and he argued that likely the only way West-

ern could improve its academic reputation was to raise more funds itself.

One example he cited was a scholarship program he developed with the Coca-Cola Foundation in Atlanta that gave Clemson University a way to recruit top students.

Ramsay said Clemson raised its SAT score average by 100 points under the program and increased the number of minority students.

HAMMOND, meanwhile, presented himself as an experienced presi-
dent, thanks to his tenure at Fort Hays State University.

Among his accomplishments, he said, was his school’s guaranteed four-year degrees or the fifth year in free, graduate’s high employment rate, growing enrollment and compu-
ter and internet access for stu-
dents.

But what he really stressed was the changing nature of education, thanks to innovations such as the Internet.

Like Ramsay, Hammond said he thinks Kentucky has an opportunity to lead the transformation of higher education in the information age.

“Technology is changing so fast, I’ve found some 40 full Web pro-

grams on the Internet,” Hammond said. “State borders are going to dis-
appear.”

Already 900 Fort Hays students using computers and other technology have earned degrees without ever setting foot on campus, he said.

PAYNE, in a telephone interview, said that during his visit next week, he plans to talk about Western’s need to have a sharply defined mission, play a key role in economic develop-
ment, and produce responsible, con-
tributing graduates.

Payne said he also will discuss what he considers to be the pres-
ident’s key role in fund raising.

(For a related story, see Section B5 of today’s Courier-Journal.)
Ransdell second candidate in final stage of search

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
The Daily News
Western Kentucky University presidential finalist Gary Ransdell will get a glimpse of his past and perhaps his future when he visits the Bowling Green campus Tuesday.

Ransdell of Clemson, S.C., who is vice president for administration and advancement at Clemson University, will have dinner tonight with Western’s Board of Regents. On Tuesday, he will be the second of four finalists to visit the campus.

He said he has fond memories of Western. He received a bachelor’s degree from the school and met and married his wife, Julie, while both were students there.

“Western is a very meaningful place to Julie and to me,” he said.

The Randsells returned to the university in 1978 when he became associate director of alumni affairs at Western.

“I had the opportunity to grow and learn from some wonderful presidents at Western,” Ransdell said. “When it came time to leave Western and grow ... those lessons served me well.”

Now he hopes to succeed Thomas Meredith, who left Western’s presidency to become chancellor of the University of Alabama system, and help shape the school’s future.

“Western has marvelous potential,” Ransdell said. “It is poised for a transformation and is ready to make the necessary changes to achieve national recognition.”

Ransdell said Western must determine its strengths and concentrate on making them better.

“I think the board (of regents) is resolved to working with the president to determine Western’s strengths and to allocate, and perhaps reallocate, resources toward those priorities in order to receive national recognition in those areas,” he said.

Ransdell said one of his top accomplishments at Clemson was his role in a reorganization in which the university redirected $6 million from administrative operations into academics.

“We simply needed to devote more money to academic programs where we have an opportunity to excel,” he said.

Marie Staedeli, who has been Ransdell’s administrative assistant for 11 years, describes him as an honest, open, outgoing, high-energy man who knows what needs to be done.

“He is everywhere,” she said. “Wherever he needs to be, he’s there. He never looks to find an excuse why he can’t be.”

Despite his hectic schedule, Ransdell finds time for his family.

July Ransdell said her husband often comes from work to attend one of their two sons’ baseball games. Then, after his family goes to bed, he returns to the office or spreads out paperwork in the dining room, she said.

The couple still keeps in touch with friends they made while at Western.

Bowling Green attorney Kevin Brooks said he met Gary Ransdell in 1971. They were in the same fraternity, and their wives were in the same sorority.

“He’s an old, dear friend,” Brooks said.

Gary Ransdell has always been well-organized, disciplined and focused, Brooks said.

“He’s sort of one of those eternal positive guys,” he said.

WKU finalist has Big Red past

Schedule for Gary Ransdell

By the Daily News
Each of the four finalists for Western Kentucky University’s presidency will have several opportunities to meet with faculty and staff members, as well as students and business leaders.

The schedule for Gary Ransdell on Tuesday includes:

• 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. — He will attend a community leader breakfast at University Plaza Hotel.
• 10:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. — He will speak with the media in the Regents Conference Room at the Wetherby Administration Building.
• 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. — He will tour the president’s office in Wetherby Administration Building.
• 11 a.m. to noon — He will participate in focus groups made up of selected faculty and staff members and students in the Memorial Room at Garrett Conference Center.
• 12:12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. — He will have lunch with executive officers and deans in Room 100 at Garrett Conference Center.
• 1:45 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. — He will meet students in Room 103 of Garrett Conference Center.
• 2:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. — He will participate in an open forum in Room 103 of Garrett Conference Center.
• 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. — He will meet in closed session with regents.

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Two WKU alumni among four finalists for university president

Daily News erred in earlier report on candidates

By the Daily News

Two alumni apparently are among the four finalists to succeed Thomas Meredith as president of Western Kentucky University, contrary to a report in Tuesday’s Daily News.

Jim Ramsey, state budget director and Western’s vice president for finance and administration, and Gary Ransdell, vice president of administration and advancement at Clemson University in South Carolina, both of whom have ties to Western, apparently are among four finalists whose names will be given by a search committee to the Board of Regents on July 25, according to published reports.

The regents will make the final decision.

Regent Cornelius Martin, who is chairman of the search committee, declined to identify the finalists.

Martin did, however, dispute a story and its headline in Tuesday’s Daily News that had indicated none of the finalists had any ties to Western. The story specifically mentioned that Ramsey was not a candidate.

The newspaper acknowledged today that its story was wrong.

“One in the position of having to retract a story is never an enviable spot, but the newspaper’s story was incorrect. Assumptions were made that, regardless of how they were arrived at, were wrong,” Managing Editor David C.L. Bauer said. “We pride ourselves on accuracy and that makes this situation especially disheartening. We apologize for the error.”

Ramsey, 48, received his bachelor’s degree in business administration from Western and got his master’s degree and his doctorate in economics from the University of Kentucky.

He has taught at Western, the University of Kentucky, Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Loyola University in New Orleans. He also has been chief state economist and now state budget director.

Ransdell, 45, has a bachelor’s degree in mass communications and a master’s degree in public administration from Western. He received his doctorate in higher education from Indiana University in 1978.

He worked in alumni affairs at Western for three years after he received his doctorate and was then hired as director of alumni relations at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. In 1987, he was hired as vice president of administration and advancement at Clemson.

WKU Board of Regents Chairwoman Peggy Loofman said the finalists will be interviewed on campus late in August so students and faculty members can participate in the process.

Meredith left last month to become chancellor of the University of Alabama system.
Ransdell going to Texas

A Western Kentucky University administrator has been appointed alumni relations director of Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

Dr. Gary A. Ransdell, who is associate director of alumni affairs at WKU, will be SMU's new executive director of alumni association and director of alumni affairs. The Louisville native has also served Western as a field representative and as a graduate instructor for college student personnel services.

Ransdell will assume his new duties June 1.

D. V. 4-30-81
Ransdell inks with Clemson

After making a verbal commitment to play baseball for Clemson on Aug. 27, Bowling Green High School standout Matt Ransdell made it official Wednesday by signing a national letter of intent.

"That was my one goal," Ransdell said. "I've been working so hard to try and achieve this and now it's official. It's just great."

Ransdell batted .450 last season for the Purples' Fourth Region championship team. He also had a .578 on-base percentage, 17 stolen bases and three home runs.

Ransdell said he was hopeful that he might get to play some right away.

"My freshman year, I'll probably be a utility player and play shortstop, second and third," he said. "My sophomore year, I'll probably start moving into one set position."

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