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WKU Student Affairs

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BY MONICA KAST
HERALD NEWS@WKU.EDU

New WKU store to open in Stadium Park Plaza

BY MONICA KAST
HERALD NEWS@WKU.EDU

New appointments take place in Student Affairs

BY MONICA KAST
HERALD NEWS@WKU.EDU

Several new administrative appointments have taken place within the Division of Student Affairs, according to university officials.

Brian Kuster, the former director of Housing and Residence Life, was appointed vice president for Student Affairs at the end of last semester. After being appointed, Kuster made several new appointments within the division.

“This has been an exciting month or so,” he said.

Lynne Holland was appointed the new chief diversity officer, according to an email from President Gary Ransdell. The position was formerly associated with the Academic Affairs office and is now within the Student Affairs division.

Holland said she could not comment at time of publication.

In the email announcing Holland’s appointment, Ransdell said, “By transitioning the Chief Diversity Officer duties from Academic Affairs to Student Affairs, we, in our opinion, properly align these important services with other student-related services in the Division of Student Affairs.”

Kuster said the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion was “put back under Student Affairs just last Monday.”

“The office had been under Student Affairs about 8 years ago,” he said. “It was kind of a natural move back into Student Affairs because the primary focus is on students.”

Holland was also recently appointed assistant vice president for Student Affairs and dean of students by Brian Kuster. Formerly, Holland served as the director for the Center of Career and Professional Development and the Student Accessibility Resource Center.

Holland appointed Robert Unzel, who was formerly assistant director for the two centers, to her former position.

Holland was contacted for comment on her new appointments but was not available for comment.

Kit Tolbert, who was the director of Housing Operations, has been appointed to Kuster’s former position as director of THH.

“Kit and I have worked together forever,” said Kuster. “They’re very well trained and dedicated. We have a very diverse leadership within the division also, which I think is important.”

WHAT’S ONLINE AT WKUHERAL.COM

Lynne Howard
Brian Kuster

Our biggest resource for helping students is our professional staff.

Vice President of Student Affairs

Brian Kuster

30 years or more;” Kuster said. “She was obviously a natural choice for that position. Kit was getting ready to retire on March 31... but she decided to stay around for this opportunity.”

Kuster said all appointments and changes within Student Affairs became effective on Jan. 2, the staff’s first day back from break.

“Our biggest resource for helping students is our professional staff,” Kuster said. “They’re very well trained and dedicated. We have a very diverse leadership within the division also, which I think is important.”

New WKU store to open in Stadium Park Plaza

BY MONICA KAST
HERALD NEWS@WKU.EDU

WKU will be opening a new store in the Stadium Park Plaza in downtown Bowling Green in conjunction with a new Starbucks location.

The new store, located in what was formerly Hitcents Park Plaza near the Bowling Green ballpark, will sell WKU merchandise and student-made items, according to WKU officials.

According to Gary Meszaros, the assistant vice president of Business and Auxiliary Services, the new location will target those who may not be inclined to visit the other store locations.

“It’s more of a tourist attraction because it is downtown,” he said. “We’ll also have souvenirs, gloves, polo shirts, spotters — maybe even Hot Rod merchandise — things like that. It should be very unique.”

He also said they hope eventually to sell things like beer and cheese from the WKU farms.

Meszaros explained how the gallery works with the owner of the location and also works with the WKU Roses, a WKU Residences, the new location and also works with the WKU Roses, a WKU Resident District Manager at ARAMARK Higher Education and also works with the WKU Residence Life Team. He helped obtain the approval needed to open a Starbucks in the new WKU Store at Stadium Park Plaza.

“This is a really unique opportunity for us,” Horning said.

Unlike the Starbucks located on campus, this one will be open year-round. On campus, Starbucks closes during breaks and holidays.

“Today was the first day to enter Stadium Park Plaza for its brand recognition,” Horning said.

Horning explained the WKU Store would operate as the owner of the Starbucks inside.

Meszaros added that the gallery selling student work and products would operate.

WKU president Gary Ransdell prepares to announce his resignation at the Board of Regents meeting at WKU’s Elizabethtown campus on Jan. 29. Ransdell’s retirement from his presidency will be effective June 30, 2017. EMILY KASKER/Herald

RANSDELL RETIRES

President Ransdell announces plan to retire June 2017

BY JACOB DICK
HERALD NEWS@WKU.EDU

T he next 17 months will be a crucial time as Gary Ransdell prepares to step down as WKU’s ninth president. WKU will be searching for a new leader while Ransdell spends his final months reshaping the university he rebuilt to cope with dramatic changes in how the state funds higher education.

“The pace of this university will quicken over the next 17 months. We have much to address and much to achieve,” Ransdell said Friday in announcing his planned retirement at a WKU Board of Regents meeting in Elizabethtown.

“It’s emotional, but there is much work to do over the next 17 months,” Ransdell said. “I see RANSDELL PAGE A2

Herald News

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“Kit and I have worked together forever,” said Kuster. “They’re very well trained and dedicated. We have a very diverse leadership within the division also, which I think is important.”
When Kristen Miller was the student body president in 1997, there was a significant gap in the mental health issues that were being addressed on campus. Miller recognized the need for a more comprehensive mental health support system, which led to the creation of the NAMI chapter at WKU. She worked closely with the National Alliance for Mental Illness to establish a support group for students with mental health issues. Miller’s advocacy efforts initially involved five other friends, and they all agreed that a mental health support group was necessary. Initially, the group consisted of five people, and they started meeting in a location that was accessible and comfortable for everyone. Miller’s involvement in the creation of the support group was crucial, as she recognized the need for a space where students could feel safe and supported in discussing their mental health challenges.

The support group, originally called Connections, was later renamed the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) student chapter. This change in name reflected the organization’s broader mission to provide support and advocacy for individuals with mental illness and their families. Miller’s leadership was instrumental in establishing this support system, and her efforts were recognized beyond WKU. Miller was later elected to the National NAMI board of directors and became an advocate for mental health issues on a national level.

Miller’s work with NAMI and her advocacy efforts were not limited to WKU. She also served as a consultant for the creation of the NAMI chapter at the University of Kentucky, where she continued her efforts to support students and improve mental health services in the community.

Miller credits her experience as WKU’s student body president with providing her with the skills and experience necessary to advocate for mental health issues. She notes that her time in leadership positions taught her the importance of recognizing and addressing gaps in services and creating spaces where students could feel supported and empowered.

In conclusion, Kristen Miller’s work as WKU’s student body president in 1997 was a turning point in the university’s efforts to address mental health issues. Her leadership and advocacy efforts were instrumental in creating the NAMI chapter at WKU, which has provided a critical resource for students dealing with mental illness. Miller’s experience as a student leader and her advocacy work have continued to influence her career and her commitment to improving mental health services in the community.
A new safety app funded through the Division of Student Affairs will not be coming to WKU within the next 17 months. The app will likely be through a different project or an entirely new one.

Similar to Eastern Kentucky University’s LiveSafe app, WKU’s Guardian will be a guide to security. The Student Government Association President Jay Todd Bicey said the idea behind the app is that “it’s one of the primary goals of the WKU Student Government Association to enhance campus safety.”

“With a mobile app, we can go to every student responder where the student is located and possibly where they’re going,” Bicey said. “Our app is not ready to be used by students.”

“We have a meeting schedul- ed to go over it with 24/7 Tech this week. We are supposed to receive the logistics and see if we’re able to get it up and running.”

According to Osello, the app will also be available for regional campuses to use.

“This is a smartphone app, it will be able to work outside of the WKU network, and if the student is found to be in a dangerous situation, increase their severity of campus crime.”

“TIAA will be the way we go on future projects,” Osello said. “Definitely some level of testing, make the appropriate changes and then we’ll be able to roll it out.”

“TIAA is going to be our insurance provider, and they work closely with us in the IT department, so I think that’s a good thing.”

The WKU Student Government Association will be making the app, with discussions and direction from the Board of Regents.

“Any information that we get is fed back to the student’s location and tell the student’s family where the student is and ask for higher assistance,” Madariaga said. “We’ll be able to do everything we can to help our students who feel uncertain about their safety.”

“The app is designed specifically to fit the campus,” Osello said. “We can use that with the police know what’s going on, help officers get to who knows what’s going on.”

“The app is there to help assist where the student is located and potentially where the student is heading,” Madariaga said. “It’s not to take the place of the police officers or others to whom the student has decided to reach.”

“Because we’re so technologically advanced, we want students to use technology to their advantage,” Madariaga said. “We’ll be able to do everything we can to help our students.”

“Unfortunately, the app is not available to the whole Bowling Green community.”

“It’s for WKU students, faculty, and staff,” Osello said. “We’ll be able to invite the app to the students, as long as they have a link to WKU Community.”

“The app will provide calling features for campus police and 911. It will also sound an alert on student’s smartphones in case they cannot reach the blue emergency towers located around campus.”

“Maintaining the safety of campus is an important endeavor for WKU to instill.”

“It’s letting students know that we care about them and what happens to them,” Madariaga said. “We’re trying to do everything we can to keep our students safe as possible.”

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EDITORIAL
Bevin cuts higher ed
PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS COULD PROVE TO BE DEVASTATING TO WKU

THE ISSUE: Last week, Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin presented his plan to cut higher education funding by 9 percent over the next two years, as well as an immediate 4.5 percent cut completed by executive action.

OUR STANCE: A college education is necessary when entering the workforce, but Kentucky is putting less of an emphasis on the importance of postsecondary education.

DURING THE STATE BUDGET PROPOSED last fall, Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin proposed some major cuts in postsecondary education funding. While the 9 percent decrease in state funding is yet to be approved, the 4.5 percent cut will be immediately implemented.

The means that WKU will have to cut $3.4 million from its operating budget by June 30. The university will need to make adjustments for these cuts, which will likely result in a tuition raise and negatively affect programs and departments all over campus.

In spring 2013, the budget was reduced by about $2.1 million due to the Council on Postsecondary Education’s decision to limit the following fall semester’s tuition increase to 3 percent. When this happened, programs like the Center of Excellence in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences were eliminated, and funding for the Falkenberg and computer replacement across campus was reduced, according to the May 13, 2010 edition of the Herald. Now, the cuts will amount to over $1.3 million more than those made two years ago, which means more sacrifices.

These budget cuts at the state level feel as though postsecondary education is being put on the back burner. Bevin’s focus on workforce readiness seems to be turning the citiizens of Kentucky into commodities that will be sold at the lowest possible price. While this is the focus of many industries, that isn’t the only purpose. College is a crucial part of career readiness and personal betterment.

Nothing can be done about the 4.5 percent decrease, but hopefully the 9 percent won’t make it through the House and Senate. Should Bevin’s budget pass, WKU would see decreases across the board. We should demand transparency from local legislators and our governor. If our Commonwealth leaders are serious about keeping Kentucky students in Kentucky, they should stop Bevin’s budget in its tracks. Otherwise, they send a message to Kentucky’s universities and students that the place little value in our postsecondary education.

We first plan on expanding our curriculums at WKU to suit the needs of the workforce. In the first steps of moving in unison with the Counseling and Testing Center and student organizations on campus, this council (or whatever name we choose) will ultimately move toward a more united front. We are in the first steps of moving toward other important goals as well, and I believe we can make a real difference in ending this pervasive problem.

As president of the WKU Student Government Association, I am incredibly excited for the semester ahead. This spring, the Student Government Association plans to accomplish much on behalf of the WKU community. We will plan on expanding our current SGA initiatives and starting new ones. MyCampusLife, the diversity enhancement initiative we kicked off last fall, will continue its efforts working extensively with student leaders in the African American, Latino, LGBT and international communities along with others throughout the spring to promote inclusion and belonging for all students.

In April, we look forward to launching a campaign to help end sexual assault at WKU in coordination with It’s On Us, a national movement to change the conversation about sexual assault on campus. By working in unison with the Counseling and Testing Center and student organizations across campus, I believe we can make a real difference in ending this pervasive problem.

As president of the SGA, the Student Government Association has undertaken so far to make WKU a more environmentally conscious and safe campus. In partnership with the Office of Sustainability, we are planning a spectacular Earth Day celebration. We are in the first steps of moving toward other important goals as well, including campaigning for mental health awareness and improving student veteran policies for student mothers.

Aside from these initiatives, I also intend to make several administrative reforms so your student leadership can work more effectively to help each student achieve their college experience. This semester, I will create an Office of Sustainability to oversee all sustainability initiatives on campus. This council will function as a forum where important concerns and issues can be discussed and hopefully shared with the rest of the student body.

I also want to explore our options in forming a task force of students and faculty members, including administrative officials, to work in unison to discuss the problems and learning from the best practices of other student government representatives.

Finally, while they may not get a lot of attention, the Student Body Association at our regional campuses are vital to effectively serving all students regardless of which campus they attend. It is often tough to communicate and coordinate with the different schools across Kentucky, including our sister conference Bethel and Kent."
Across
1 Big initials in tobacco
4 Devices with scroll wheels
8 Many an old-movie criminal mastermind
14 Perrier, par exemple
15 Sick as __
16 Jittery
17 Visitor’s first attempt
19 Emphatic type
20 Training group
21 Like milligrams and kilograms
23 Baseball family name
24 Actress Thompson of “Family”
25 “My bad!”
29 Queen-to-be, maybe
30 Visitor’s second attempt
33 Hum a lullaby for
35 Common starting time
36 Justice Dept. division
37 Sean’s mom
39 Unlikely Monopoly outcomes
41 Student carrier
44 Peeled-off item
46 “Big crunch” pickle brand
50 Visitor’s third attempt
53 Asi export
54 Kids’ __: restaurant offering
55 “The Dukes of Hazzard” deputy
56 Indigo source
57 Ottoman export
58 Get all mushy
59 Invites
60 Playing marble
61 Nixes
64 Visitor’s last words
66 How megastores buy goods
67 Boo-boo
68 Snitch
69 Assumes to be true
70 Ring units: Abbr.
71 Porter kin
72

Down
1 Baggage handlers
2 Game with cestas and pelotas
3 Seedy
4 Good way to have it?
5 Knot-tying words
6 One with a racket
7 Stirred up
8 Conservationist John
9 Against
10 Church official
11 Start to practice?
12 “__ live and breathe!”
13 B’way setting
14 Unspoken
18 Seedy
22 Unspoken
24 Chicago suburb
26 Stomach-punch response
27 Banned chem. contaminant
28 Snow slider
31 Sushi chef’s array
32 Ship’s spine
34 Unable to choose
38 “Rings Fingers”: 1942 Fonda/Tierney film
40 Wild and fierce
41 Emeter exclamation
42 Le Mans article
43 Peek, for peep: Abbr.
45 Toast, so to speak
47 Of: Blue Eyes
48 Monogram component
49 “Egg” author
51 “Right away, madame!”
52 Four Tops’ record label
53 Astir of some MLB postseason games
54 “The Dukes of Hazzard” deputy
55 “The Dukes of Hazzard” deputy
56 Indigo source
57 Ottoman export
58 Get all mushy
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60 Playing marble
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Blythe Ann Hockensmith of Bowling Green irons an actor’s tie on Jan. 26 while backstage fulfilling her duties as the costume designer for the show “Wait Until Dark”, written by Frederick Knott, directed by Nick Hudson of Bowling Green. The play is showing at the Phoenix Public Theatre of Kentucky from Jan. 28 through Feb. 7.

Gracie Davis of Bowling Green, 11, reads her lines for her role as Gloria in the show.

In the mystery drama “Wait Until Dark,” Nick Hudson, a WKU theatre alumnus, branches away from comedy for the first time and adapts to the new genre’s challenges. “Approaching a drama is really different,” Hudson said. He coached main actress Dare Norman, also a WKU alumna, on making people believe she is blind. For example, she had to learn how to respond to items on stage and to make sure nothing caught her eye.

With many scenes in the dark, Hudson said, it has been the most technically savvy show he’s been involved with. “It’s definitely the most enjoyable play I’ve directed,” he said. The show runs at the Public Theatre of Kentucky from Jan. 28 to Feb. 7, Thursday through Saturday, 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m.

Nick Hudson of Bowling Green directed actors and actresses on how to enter and exit the stage for the finale of Wait Until Dark.

Blue luminescent lights dimmed backstage as actors waited to go onstage during the play Wait Until Dark on Jan. 29. Dare Norman, right, kept her mind occupied before her performance by looking at pictures on her phone. The play will show up until February 7th.
If there’s something strange in your neighborhood, do you know who to call? If you’re struggling to find some- one, do you have a plan? If you’re just looking for an activity, specifically ghosts. Edwards has been with the BG Ghost Society since 2010.

The Ghost Society investigates paranormal cases. Jenny Edwards of Bowling Green holds a protection necklace that was blessed by a priest to help ward off unkind spirits during a ghost investigation at 808 East 11th Street. Edwards had to write journals and correspond with other ghost hunters around the world with you, but to me it’s part of my life,” she said.

Scott said she used to see and hear things at her grandfather’s house when she was younger. She said her mother, sister and aunt are the same way. She considers it a gift to be able to communicate and see the other side, but it comes with its drawback. “Sometimes it’s a nightmare. You know especially when you bring things home with you, but it’s part of your life,” she said.

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Students share opinions on new Panama City ordinance

BY BRITTANY MOORE

When the spring semester begins, many of us begin counting down the days until we leave for spring break. However, due to new city ordinances, those who work and study on campus long vacation is a perfect chance for relaxation and fun.

“Spring break as we know it is over,” Goodwin said. “A lot of people will still want to go, but it’s going to hurt them,” Edwards said. “I know it had to be something,” Hanner said. “This is an invaluable experience for those students who are studying the paranormal and gateway to the supernatural.”

“Students are not going to be happy with it, and it’ll make them find some other way to go,” Edwards said. “Most companies make their yearlong vacation, and there will still be concerts and fun. However, Goodwin said students will still be able to drink in the city. He also feared even more students would go to trouble by trying to smuggle alcohol onto the beach.”

“Students will be happy,” Edwards said. “It’s still a great beach for those who will be there!”

“If we are going to do this, we need to have a lot of time to practice at home,” he said.

By EMMA AUSTIN

HERALD@WKU.EDU

Boyd Footrakul, a senior from Thailand majoring in mechanical engineering, said his life involves anything with speed—a passion that carried him to race cars. A member of the Kentucky State Jet Racing Association, Footrakul has been competing since he was 12, having spent his childhood summers learning the sport from his father.

Footrakul was also involved in the Jet Ski Racing Association, which he joined after he missed a buoy, he was sent to 12th. He received a penalty, which harmed his overall score. Points are awarded if a competitor receives a penalty, which harms the racer’s overall score. Points are awarded if a buoy during the race, he or she returns to 1st in his class at the competition.

Footrakul explained that after each race, a number of participants was announced on the place in each race finished. Footrakul expressed his grade broke down during one of the races, and because of this, he couldn’t finish that race.

Footrakul said he placed fourth over all in the King Cup this year. In addition to Jet Ski, Footrakul also races go-karts and motorcycles. He is unsure if he will go to college or retire after six years, but he hopes to find a place in the Sunshine State.

Footrakul explained that a Spirit Box is a mediator between Hanner and Edwards. It is a device that allows people to communicate with spirits. The box is connected to an EMF detector in Kolb’s room before the investigation. Kolb was upstairs investigating, while Hanner and Scott were downstairs investigating. Kolb said he missed a buoy, and as a result, he was sent to 12th. He received a penalty, which harmed his overall score. Points are awarded if a competitor receives a penalty, which harms their overall score. Points are awarded if a competition

Footrakul explained that each race is divided by number of years. To be eligible to race at the finals, competitors must place in the top 10 of years. Footrakul placed sixth overall in his class at the competition. He explained that every year, he received a penalty, which harmed his overall score. Points are awarded if a competitor receives a penalty, which harms their overall score. Points are awarded if

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The WKU football program announced on Thursday the addition of three transfers from the University of Louis-
ville who will join the Hilltop-
ners for the 2016 season. Quarterback Tyler Ferguson, who in his last season at the Meyo Invitational in South Bend, Indiana. Notre Dame will have a chance in the C-USA tournament. With their upcoming opponents posting a combined record of 15-29, the Toppers must capitalize on these lower-ranked teams in the conference if they want to move up the rankings and have a chance in the C-USA tournament. Men's Basketball

Continued from Sports

Fresh Food Company

Mon.-Fri. 7 am - 8 pm
Sat. 10 am - 10 pm
Sun. 10 am - 8 pm
Located at Dining Commons Entrance

RedZone (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 11 am - 10 pm
Sat. 10 am - 9 pm
Sun. 10 am - 7 pm

DU Food Court

Mon.-Fri. 10 am - 2 pm
Sat. 10 am - 2 pm
Sun. 10 am - 2 pm
Located at Dining Commons Entrance

Starbucks (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 7 am - 9 pm
Sat. 8 am - 9 pm
Sun. 8 am - 9 pm
Located at Dining Commons Entrance

Burrito Bowl

Mon.-Fri. 8 am - 10 pm
Sat. 8 am - 10 pm
Sun. 8 am - 10 pm
Located at Dining Commons Entrance

Subway (New Hours)

Mon.-Thurs. 7 am - 11:30 pm
Fri. 7 am - 11 pm
Sat. 8 am - 10 pm
Sun. 9 am - 10 pm
Located at Dining Commons Entrance

P.O.D. Market @ Bates

Mon.-Thurs. 7:30 am - 9 pm
Fri. 7:30 am - 7 pm
Sat. 7 am - 6 pm
Sun. 7 am - 3 pm
Located at Residence Halls

Passport Bistro

Mon.-Fri. 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm
Sat. 8:30 am - 7:30 pm
Sun. 8:30 am - 7:30 pm
Located at University Center

Einstein Bros. Bagels (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 7 am - 10 pm
Sat. 10 am - 3 pm
Sun. 10 am - 3 pm
Located at University Center

Tower Food Court

Mon.-Fri. 11 am - 11 pm
Sat. 11 am - 10 pm
Sun. 11 am - 9 pm
Located at Tower Court West of UY

Java City Library (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 7 am - 3 pm
Sat. 9 am - 3 pm
Sun. 9 am - 3 pm
Located at College of Arts and Sciences

GCG Subway (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 10 am - 10 pm
Sat. 10 am - 10 pm
Sun. 10 am - 10 pm
Located at College of Arts and Sciences

Garrett Food Court (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 7 am - 10 pm
Sat. 7 am - 10 pm
Sun. 7 am - 10 pm
Located at College of Arts and Sciences

Panda Express (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 10 am - 2 pm
Sat. 10 am - 2 pm
Sun. 10 am - 2 pm
Located at College of Arts and Sciences

DelVinci's (New Hours)

Mon.-Fri. 10 am - 2 pm
Sat. 10 am - 2 pm
Sun. 10 am - 2 pm
Located at College of Arts and Sciences

Topper Grill and Pub

Mon.-Thurs. 11 am - 10 pm
Fri. 11 am - 11 pm
Sat. 11 am - 11 pm
Sun. 11 am - 10 pm
Located at University Center

Spring 2016 Regular Hours
Sophomore forward Justin Johnson (23) puts up a shot against Middle Tennessee at Diddle Arena Saturday. The Hilltoppers lost the game with a final score of 66-64.

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In today's paper
Ransdell's underrated support of student media

BY BRANDON CARTER  
HERALD EDITOR@WKU.EDU

In the 19 years President Ransdell has spent in WKU’s top office, he’s worn many hats: fundraising guru, champion for athletics and forger of international partnerships. Perhaps his most underrated action, though, has been his support of student media.

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Perhaps his most underrated action, though, has been his support of student media. Ransdell is by no means a perfect president. He and his administration have faced their fair share of criticism from the Herald editorial board over the past 19 years on a variety of important issues. The next 17 months will prove no different.

As the university begins the long process of selecting its 11th president in the midst of potentially drastic budget cuts, the Herald will continue to ask the questions and demand the answers our readers deserve.

But Ransdell’s commitment to student media allows us to ask those questions and do that reporting, and it’s that commitment to which I tip my hat.

I challenge the Board of Regents to take this into consideration during the upcoming presidential search. Will you consider candidates with outstanding fundraising capabilities and the ability to ensure academic excellence amidst budgetary woes, one thing near to be very clear: a candidate who doesn’t respect the freedom of the student press is not a candidate WKU needs and is not a candidate who merits even the slightest consideration.

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Many people understand that all it takes to make a difference can be the dedication of just one person. In the last 20 years at WKU, no one has made a larger impact on this campus than President Gary Ransdell. Ransdell's time at WKU has featured unprecedented growth in several areas of college life. The area that has arguably experienced the most growth during his tenure is WKU Athletics. It's important to understand that there are other aspects of college life that are very important to the overall growth of a university, and not everyone views sports as the most important of these.

That debate aside, one cannot underestimate the impact a successful sports program can have on a college campus. For example, after quarterback Johnny Manziel won the Heisman Trophy and led the Texas A&M Aggies to a bigger season in football in 2012, the school saw its highest enrollment in history during the following fall semester as a result of 9,710 freshmen arriving on campus. Like Manziel at A&M, Ransdell has made a big impact on sports programs at WKU. In Ransdell's case, his work has been behind the scenes.

In perhaps his most significant contribution to sports on this campus, Ransdell successfully negotiated the move to Conference USA in 2014. This move from the Sun Belt Conference was visionary; the future of the athletic program at WKU was ensured in a conference with wider renown and a higher level of play. In the 2014-15 school year, WKU's first season in the conference, athletics programs achieved a C-USA record by bringing home eight conference championships.

Since Ransdell's first year as president, Hilltoppers athletic programs have won 202 million in gifts and pledges. The renovation featured construction of a new west side for Smith Stadium and cheer on fans. The stadium's capacity was increased by 2,113. Current WKU's first season in the conference was in 2006.

One of the first things that will need to be addressed is the 4.5 percent cut to the operating budget that needs to be done by June 30. This $3.4 million decrease in state funding was announced by Gov. Matt Bevin last Tuesday as his first state budget proposal in which the university was included.

Certainly the measure of university success is student experience. Ransdell stated in an email to faculty and staff last Wednesday, “I cannot at this time even begin to describe how we would address the proposed reductions.”

Many feel that it is in their best interest for the next 17 years to find a new vice president of Academic Affairs, provost and dean of Potter College. The next year will be a busy one for the administration and President Ransdell, and all of the changes that need to be made will not be easy. There will be a lot of hard work ahead. The next time you stand in Smith Stadium and cheer on the Hilltoppers, don’t forget to think about the difference one person can make.
Herald photographers have shot plenty of photos of WKU president Gary Ransdell during the course of his 19-year presidency. After Ransdell’s retirement announcement on Friday, Jan. 29, we began combing our archives looking for our best shots; we were not disappointed. Here’s a photo page of some of our favorites.

NOTE: Some of these photos are without captions or photo credit. We’ve made every effort to properly attribute each photo, but were unable to obtain information for all photos by press time.

WKU president Gary Ransdell puts on his gloves before boarding the Golden Knights plane. Ransdell jumped from the plane to deliver the game ball for the WKU vs. Army game on Nov. 15, 2014. JAKE POPPE/HERALD

RIGHT: WKU President Gary Ransdell awaits his debut as Big Red before the men’s basketball game against Florida International Thursday night at Diddle Arena. No one in the crowd knew Ransdell was inside the suit, except for his wife, Julie.

“It’s been burning inside me for 22-years,” said Ransdell, who was on the planning committee that developed Big Red more than two decades ago. After 30 minutes of working the crowd and anonymously performing as Big Red, Ransdell said that it was fun. “The kids are neat. The students are neat. But the adults don’t quite know how to take Big Red.”

H. RICK MACH/HERALD

WKU president Gary Ransdell participates in the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge in front of Guthrie Bell Tower on Friday, Aug. 22. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease, is a neurodegenerative disorder. HARRISON HILL/HERALD