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UA3/10/2 Strategic Planning

WKU President's Office - Caboni

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Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the completion of the first 100 days of a new WKU presidency, it is time for us to turn our attention to the critical work we will accomplish together this year: strategic planning.

During the past three months, I have had the pleasure of meeting individually or in small groups with well over 100 WKU faculty and staff. I visited with a broad cross-section of the university at offices in almost every academic building on our campus. The purpose was to ask questions and listen, to get a sense of the community’s view of our challenges and opportunities, and to get to know people on a personal level. It also provided a chance to determine who might be interested in being involved with our strategic planning process.

During the next nine months, we will create a roadmap for our future that carves out a place for us nationally and allows us to confidently claim our role as a leader among public institutions in the US. This presents a tremendous opportunity for us to articulate as a community our shared aspirations for WKU. We must seize the moment and be aggressive, creative and bold as we craft a compelling vision for our university.

Higher education across the country faces challenges, and we are not immune from those. However, our process must be about more than just overcoming obstacles. While some portion of our conversation will focus on efficiencies, cost savings and budgets, there are other crucial decisions to be made around the possibilities available to us as a student-centered applied research university.

This Summer, I presented to the Board of Regents at their annual retreat an aggressive, but achievable timeline for how we will build our plan. During the Fall, working groups will collect data; assess our strengths, challenges, opportunities and
weaknesses; detail emerging themes; and draft preliminary reports. In January, they will hold open forums, collect feedback and compile draft recommendations to the steering committee. Those recommendations will then be distilled into a draft plan for community feedback and revision in late Spring. We will present a final plan to the Board of Regents for approval at their July meeting and will launch our new strategic plan in August as the new academic year begins.

As part of my charge to each of the working groups, I will include the following guiding questions:

- What institutional changes will position WKU as a national leader in our areas of intellectual strength, both in instruction and inquiry?
- How might we arrange ourselves differently to pursue exciting, cross-disciplinary collaborations that are attractive to students, industry and ourselves?
- What budget model will allow us to be more nimble, reward performance and allocate resources to new priorities while focusing on student attraction, retention and graduation?
- How do we ensure every student we admit has a reasonable chance to graduate in four years, and how do we support them financially and academically to help enable their success?
- Are there good things that we are doing now that are no longer core to our mission or that have outlived their usefulness?

To this end, I have asked Professors Bruce Schulte and Paula Potter to co-chair the strategic planning steering committee with me. We have recruited the following working group co-chairs who now will begin their efforts:

**Academic Innovation and Excellence**: Rob Hale and Harold Little  
**Student Success and Experience**: Martha Sales and Jerry Daday  
**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**: Lynne Holland and Molly Kerby  
**Research, Scholarship and Creative Endeavors**: Kelly Madole (Faculty Research) and Dave Tatman (Corporate/Industrial Partnerships)  
**Budgeting, Efficiency and Infrastructure**: Susann deVries and Christian Ryan

In the coming days, co-chairs will assemble their groups and begin working in earnest. Once the groups are fully constituted, we will have nearly 75 people directly involved. There also will be opportunities along the way to provide feedback electronically and through open forums in the Spring. This will help shape the final product of the working groups and the steering committee.
Thank you in advance for your participation and effort as part of the planning process. I look forward to working collaboratively with all of our stakeholders to build a bold and exciting plan for how we will advance the university in the coming years.

Best,

Timothy C. Caboni
President