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WKU President's Office - Caboni

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues:

We talk frequently about the importance of the Hilltopper Family. Kacy and I are incredibly grateful for your overwhelming love and support during what has been a difficult time. We truly are a family at WKU, and it's great to be back on campus with you this week.

Two weeks into the fall semester, our students are nearing the halfway mark in the most critical time of the academic term, the first five weeks. We hope by now they have adjusted to their new schedules and living arrangements – and life on the Hill as a whole.

I'm pleased to share with you that a number of parents have contacted me to share personal stories of our Housing and Residence Life staff thoughtfully working with their students and their families to make their transition to campus housing both smooth and enjoyable. One parent said, "Every single aspect and attitude of your employees is just amazing...."

The start of the semester presents an especially busy time for our HRL staff, and we appreciate their incredible professionalism to work through a host of individual needs to ensure both our students and their families feel at home on our Hill.

At this point, students have also begun making personal connections with their faculty. Just last week, I received an email from a Hilltopper that reminded me how one individual can change a student's collegiate trajectory. Unclear as to the program of study that best aligned with his lifelong goals, this student found clarity and support from a professor who took the time to listen and guide him toward the right path. **THIS** is what we do at WKU.

Beyond the crucial student-faculty connections across our campus, I'm proud of the ways we continue to look for new opportunities to expand support for our students. One of the newer programs already demonstrating remarkable results is the Burch Institute's Freshman Guided Pathways. Focused toward typical WKU students who might need a little extra help, FGP launched a pilot program in fall 2018 with 50 Warren County participants. Because of strong first-year results, the program was expanded this year to 75 students, now including Glasgow and Barren County.

What's clear is that through purposeful mentor pairing, leadership activities, required study hours, grade checks, academic interventions and scholarship offerings based on academic performance, these students can perform at a higher rate. We're seeing terrific results in their

retention and campus engagement. But what's most important are the individual lives being transformed and the personal stories of these students discovering and achieving in ways they thought impossible. If you haven't done so already, I encourage you to visit the Kentucky Museum's *Facing the Freshman Year: Essential Conversations* exhibit to soak in all that this program has meant to our Hilltoppers. You can learn more here: <https://www.wku.edu/kentuckymuseum/exhibits/facingfreshmanyar.php>.

WKU is defined by our people. It is the people of WKU – the faculty, the staff and the students – that have and always will make this place special. As we move through the semester, remember the work you do, whether it's moving students into dorms, guiding them to their field of study, leading new programs, or more, is interconnected and has lifelong effects on our young people. Thank you for your good work. Your efforts continue to transform our students and our university.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy C. Caboni', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Timothy C. Caboni