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UA3/10/2 Shaping Student Success

WKU President's Office - Caboni

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues:

In August 2018, we welcomed the most academically prepared freshmen class in the history of WKU with an average GPA of 3.39. At 3.42 this fall, we raised the bar yet again. This important achievement stems from our work as a university to thoughtfully and strategically shape our student body. As you have heard me say on multiple occasions, our focus must be recruiting future graduates – those with the preparation, drive and work ethic to set them on a path toward success. And because we know high school GPA remains the strongest indicator of college success for beginning freshmen, we celebrate this upward academic momentum as it clearly supports our mission as an institution.

Your terrific work inside and outside the classroom is also producing very strong results in retention rates for our students. In only two years, our first-time, full-time student retention increased 3% to 72.9% - further moving WKU toward the aggressive goal of 80% by 2028. We celebrate even more impressive retention gains for our low-income students - up 4.5% from two years ago.

While the total headcount for fall 2019 is down 6.6% from last year (19,461 to 18,183), our revenue is tracking with our projections, and we anticipate no further changes to the budget. With the continued decline in the number of high school graduates in Kentucky, a weakening college-going rate, and fewer international students, we intentionally amplified our recruitment and marketing efforts outside the Commonwealth during the last two years. Because of these targeted efforts, this fall we celebrate a significant jump of 7.2%, just from last year, in enrollment of our first-time, first-year, out-of-state students. The shift from focusing on headcount to net tuition revenue is helping to restore stability to our budget and preparing us to more effectively navigate these demographic and population shifts.

While it's easy to focus on our more prominent enrollment strategies, like raising our admission standards and reinventing our scholarship program, we must also celebrate the continuous, incremental improvements that you are implementing across the university. The work you do within your offices, departments, and colleges will ensure we reach our aggressive retention and graduation goals, while we continue to achieve meaningful transformation in the lives of our students.

Thank you for your work to recruit, retain, and graduate students. It is the people of WKU that will ensure our future success and stability by ensuring that WKU remains accessible and

attractive for those seeking a student-centered, applied-learning experience that's unparalleled in the Commonwealth and beyond.

Our work is never done, but as we continue our climb to greater heights, we should take time to celebrate our significant progress in retention and financial stability while advancing the goals outlined in our strategic plan.

Best,

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

Timothy C. Caboni