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President Gary A. Ransdell to Retire in 2017

Fellow Faculty and Staff:

At this afternoon's Board of Regents' meeting, I informed the Board of my decision to retire in 2017. I am giving the Board 17 months to conduct a patient and thorough search for a new President, meaning that my last day in office will be June 30, 2017. As provided in my contract, I will then begin a six-month sabbatical leave from July 1 to December 31, 2017—at which time my employment at WKU will end.

By completing this course of action, I will have served as President of WKU for 20 years. In this era of relatively short-term presidencies, I believe 20 years is enough. I will also be 66 years old with good health, and Julie and I will be ready for other yet-to-be-determined chapters in our lives.

I believe we have fulfilled the commitment we made in 1997 to the Board of Regents and the faculty, staff, students, and alumni of WKU, to whom we pledged to lead a transformation of our great university. We have done our best to do that. WKU is a dramatically different institution today than it was 20 years ago—financially, physically, intellectually, and attitudinally.

While the pace of change in higher education may be commanding more youthful leadership, my pledge to you is that my pace and the pace of this university will quicken over the next 17 months. We have much to address and much to achieve. Specifically, I intend to give all I have to the Kentucky General Assembly this spring in defense of higher education in general and WKU specifically. I intend to spend whatever political capital I may have built up over the years in pursuit of what higher education needs in both dollars and knowledge of our values. There are also difficult decisions to make regarding the financial realities we face, and there are achievements worth pursuing, but which are more likely to be achieved if I am not constrained by job security or perceptions of personal benefit.

WKU also needs to initiate a new capital campaign. It needs a President who can start it and finish it. WKU's next campaign needs a President who can assure benefactors that he or she will be there to ensure a return on their investment. I have led WKU through two historically successful capital campaigns totaling over \$300 million, and the next one needs to be larger than the first two.

Finally, WKU requires strong leadership to lead the university through its next 5-year plan of action, including an evolving performance-based funding model which will dictate our strategic priorities.

Rest assured that I will be redoubling my efforts for the next 17 months, and give my all to ensure that our Board of Regents is well-positioned to select the best possible new leader for WKU in 2017.

There will be multiple opportunities to thank you for your personal dedication to WKU and the time that we have all devoted to this University over the last 19 years. I do, however, call on each of you to help meet the challenges before us, and seize the opportunities that together we can create over the next 17 months.

Thank you.
Gary A. Ransdell