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## UA3/9/7 2016 Spring - End of Semester Message

WKU President's Office - Ransdell

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## 2016 Spring – End of Semester Message

Fellow Faculty and Staff:

As today is the last day of classes for the Spring 2016 semester, I wanted to provide this year-end message, which closes the book on recent budget matters and allows us to turn our attention to more positive and constructive matters in the weeks and months ahead.

### Governor Bevin's Vetoes

The Governor's veto period ended last week, giving us final confirmation of our budget cut numbers—which opened the door for the action we took last week to balance our budget. A few matters of importance to WKU as it relates to the vetoes. First, the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) bill was left intact, which enables an important cost-saving measure for our Division of Extended Learning and Outreach (DELO) as we can now avoid expensive fees in states where we have an online reciprocity agreement. The \$750,000 recurring appropriation to support our WKU weather network—the Kentucky Mesonet—survived the vetoes, so we will now move forward with funding relief for this important WKU program. One veto that did get our attention was the veto language which delays the Work Ready scholarship program, which is a top-it-off scholarship for Kentucky high school graduates pursuing associate degrees at community colleges and four-year institutions. A one-year delay in this program will allow the institutions to work with state officials to more thoughtfully structure the program so that students and postsecondary institutions may all benefit from it in the future.

### Balanced Budget

With last week's actions, we will now proceed to put the finishing touches on a balanced budget for next year including over \$6,000,000 in spending reductions and a 4.5 percent tuition increase. The final budget will be submitted to the Board of Regents next month, in time for implementation on July 1. This budget will include a 3 percent salary increase for all employees spread across a 12-month period: 1 percent on July 1, 2016, 1 percent on January 1, 2017, and 1 percent on July 1, 2017. The tuition increase, and the Equity funding beginning July 1, 2017, may provide for additional salary enhancements, but we will need to wait and see what unfolds politically and financially in state government before putting the 2017-18 budget together.

### Cuts Since 2009

As indicated at our campus forum last Thursday afternoon, we have significantly reduced our spending since 2009. The attached chart shows \$18,769,100 in state reductions over the 9-year period from 2009–2017 and \$17,778,200 in reallocations of our institutional base budget needed to achieve a balanced budget in those years. These numbers reflect reduced spending across nearly every department on campus. All totaled, we have reduced our spending by \$36,547,300 since 2009 while using tuition increases to cover fixed cost increases and mandated increases in retirement system rates.

### Commencement

Now that we have closed the book on budget cuts and other financial dynamics, we can turn our attention to far more positive and constructive matters on the University calendar in the days and weeks ahead. I want to thank all of our faculty and staff for your focus on our students throughout this academic year: To our faculty, I owe a particularly strong gesture of appreciation for preparing our students for their finals next week and leading them to what will be the largest graduating class in our history this spring. Commencement weekend is a week away. We will be graduating 2,564 students across our four ceremonies from Friday night through Saturday evening. I look forward to seeing as

many Faculty as possible participating in our Spring 2016 Commencement. There is no event more inspiring on our University calendar than our Commencement ceremonies.

#### Topper Orientation Program

As I said in a Faculty/Staff message a couple weeks ago, we are in the midst of our critical Topper Orientation Program (TOP) sessions for registering new students for the Fall 2016 semester. Again, thank you to everyone who participates in these TOP programs. It is everyone's responsibility to welcome still perspective students to campus knowing that many of them will register at multiple institutions and make final enrollment decisions closer to August. A successful yield of our growing applicant pool is critical to a quality enrollment profile.

#### Fulbrights

Congratulations to the Office of Scholar Development and to all of the faculty and staff who have helped surpass our previous successes with the awarding of national and international prestigious scholarships to our students. I am delighted to report that eight WKU students and recent graduates have been awarded Fulbright grants for the coming year. We also have five students named as alternates for the Fulbright grant. This has been our best year yet in this important measure of academic strength. This Fulbright success speaks volumes about WKU, our academic substance, our colleges, and our academic departments. Many of these students conduct research, study abroad, participate in our Chinese Flagship or our Forensics team, and served as leaders on campus and in the community. Every single one of them benefited from the support of many faculty mentors and received critical guidance from our campus Fulbright committee and Fulbright program advisor—Melinda Grimsley-Smith. Attached is the list of Fulbright grantees and alternates.

We will be reporting similar successes with the Boren and Gilman scholarships and other major awards over the next few weeks.

I also want to congratulate two of our faculty—Kristin Wilson (Educational Administration, Leadership, and Research) and Kay Gandy (Teacher Education). Kristen won a Core Fulbright U.S Scholar Grant and will study in South Africa, and Kay won a Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Grant to go Senegal. Well done Kristin and Kay!

#### Busy Summer

As we head into the summer months, we will be focusing on a number of key initiatives. From a personal standpoint, I will continue to assess various administrative operations in order to present WKU's next president with as thoughtful an administrative structure as possible. On July 1, we will transfer Enrollment Management to Academic Affairs. I am growing a bit more confident that we are turning a corner on our enrollment profile for the future.

Also, this summer we will begin construction of the new parking garage in the back corner of Creason parking lot next to the WKU softball and soccer fields. This project was approved by the 2016 General Assembly following campus approvals by SGA, the Board of Regents, and Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) all within the last year or so.

And, finally, we will begin the next phase of residence hall improvements through the Student Life Foundation this summer. Look for improvements to Northeast and Southwest Halls and for finalization of plans for a new residence hall that will be needed as we begin to replace some of our outdated residence halls over the next few years.

### Retirements

Congratulations to 49 faculty and staff who are retiring this year. Many of these colleagues have devoted their entire career to WKU. Best wishes to each of you in all of your future endeavors. Perhaps now is a good time to acknowledge two of our campus leaders who had planned to retire, but chose to stay on and serve as our Provost and our Vice President for Student Affairs—thanks David Lee and Brian Kuster for your continuing leadership!

### Closing

Once again, thank you to all of our faculty and staff for what has been an eventful, stressful at times, but productive year for our University and for our students. The heartbeat of our campus rests with our faculty and staff who devote their hearts and minds to the betterment of our University environment every day. Thank you all for your service to WKU and for the completion of another successful year. Safe travels to you through the summer. I look forward to seeing everyone at our opening convocation for the 2017-18 year in Van Meter Hall on Friday, August 19. Thank you.

Gary A. Ransdell

### *Attachments*

- *Recurring State Budget Reductions and Institutional Reallocations*
- *Fulbright Recipients*



Dr. Gary A. Ransdell | President